

Reikoku no Tamir

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Summary: Tamir, a knight of Blackfire kingdom, is sent of a special mission to explore unknown worlds. What he finds is nothing he ever expected. Summary for chapter 29: Kaito is forced to challenged a huge cat and then later is stuck with a crazy seagull.

1. Chapter 1: Special Mission

****Reikoku no Tamir****

****Chapter 1: Special Mission****

My life is like a horror film...

"Bloody day, eh?"

Two longhaired hamsters stood in front of a stone-made sink in front of the huge, silver castle walls. They washed their paws of the red slime that's stench of would've made any creature wrinkle their nose in distaste. But these hamsters were used to the smell by now. Some had even come to like it.

Behind them was a neat field of short grass. A dirt trail lined it somewhere in the middle, going from the castle's door to the huge village the castle owned. The castle itself was made of stones and clay, it seemed.

"Yeahâ€¦|" the other hamster replied absently. "Well that was a bit of a dull reply," the first hamster remarked. His fur was all black expect for a patch of white over his belly. Around his neck was a yellow bandana with black in the shape of fire ringing the bottom of it.

"Dull?" The second hamster echoed. He was similar, except his fur was a chocolate brown color and his belly was patched with black. His ears tips were white along with a white spot on his shoulders and knees. He wore the same bandana.

"Yeah! Usually you're crazy about these kinda days. Nowadays you've been all up and about with this 'why are we doin' this' stuff. I'd hoped after today, you'd be full o' cheer," the black hamster replied.

The brown hamster, Tamir, only looked down thoughtfully. "It's justâ€¦" He paused. The black hamster frowned. "Dun' tell me you've been thinkin' again. You know I hate it when you do that stuff. We were specifically trained to fight without none o' that thinkin'." The black hamster shook his paws in the air to rid them of wet.

"But, Meeko, it just doesn't feel right anymore," Tamir said, looking over at his friend. "Anymore! It never felt right to me, but I do it anyway," Meeko grunted, then continued after a second..

"Listen to me, child! I would know, as a more experienced knightâ€¦ Why do we fight?" He asked. It sounded as if he didn't know where to start the sentence. Tamir didn't answer, puzzled. "'Cause the king tells us to, that's why! We gotta obey the king. Whether it 'feels right' or not is none o' our concern."

Tamir quickly looked over at his nasty tone to see the friendly dark crimson eyes he'd come to always know. "You're always looking after me, Meeko," he replied, smiling down at the water. "Just tryin' to teach you common sense! The king won't stand for nonsense talk like yours. Oh no! There's no point in livin' if you're gonna complain to the king!" Meeko said, taking a claw and pretending to slit his throat.

"I suppose. But, you knowâ€¦ What's living without complaining a little?" Tamir asked with a slight smile. Meeko shook his head slowly. "If that's livin', then I guess we're all dead, huh?" He said in a lower tone. Tamir frowned. The sound of a horn drew the two away from their conversation.

"Aw, c'mon. We just came back from a mission. Can't he at least let us take a breather?" Tamir sighed. "No breathers. Not if the king says 'no'," Meeko said, walking toward the sound of the horn. Seeing that his friend wasn't following, he turned. "You comin'?"

"Yeahâ€¦" Tamir answered after a moment of staring at the stone castle walls. He shook his paws and the two dashed across the castle grounds. In front of the castle gate were rows of hamsters all aligned. Meeko and Tamir were the last there, but no one seemed to notice. All eyes stared at the top of the castle door, where a very furry hamster stood.

The hamsters' fur looked longer than all of the hamsters' fur put together. He was black, like Meeko, but his under-belly was gray. It was becoming noticeable that the rest of his body was becoming a gray-white color, as well. His fur covered his eyes and mouth. It'd be impossible to tell his mood other than his voice, which was always muffled by the fur on his lips anyway.

The old hamster was silent for a long moment. He suddenly cleared his throat. So suddenly that it would've startled anyone who wasn't expecting it. "I congratulate you on your success today in battle," the hamster king rasped out. "But now I have another requestâ€¦ It

has become aware to me that there could be many, many other kingdoms out there. Kingdoms that could take over Blackfire kingdom. With our current war with Redwater kingdom, I can only afford to send out a certain few of my knights on this special mission." The king paused.

None of the knights made any movement. All eyes were on the king. "Baron," he suddenly said. A hamster stomped his paw on the ground in acknowledgement. "Milo." Another hamster stomped his paw. "Tamir." Despite how surprised he was, Tamir did not hesitate to stomp his paw. "Kai" and Fox." Two more hamsters stomped their paws.

"I will meet you five tonight for dinner to discuss this special mission. You are dismissed," and, with that short announcement over, the king turned and padded away. The knights watched him silently until he was out of sight. And then, like a bunch of animals let loose into the wild, they went crazy.

They all crowded around the five knights who had their names called, asking questions like "what kind of mission do you think it's going to be", or "why do you think the king chose you". A few were most interested in why the king chose Tamir. This would be his first special mission.

"Oh boy, this is great!" Meeko cheered when the two managed to get away from the crowd. Tamir could only sigh. "Heheh., you're nervous, aren't you?" Meeko laughed. "Who wouldn't be? Why do you think the king chose me, of all knights?" Tamir asked, washing his face in the stone sink.

"Well, I had to go on a special mission first once, too, you know? Everybody does something for the first time," Meeko replied. "Ah" those were the days. Spyin' on the Greenthunder kingdom. We won that war with them because of me, you know?" He gloated. "Oh really?" Tamir muttered unbelievably.

He put a soaked cloth on his face and let himself fall over on his back. "What if it was a mistake" I mean" why choose me, a not-so-experienced knight, with all of those other experienced knights?" He asked, his voice a bit muffled. "Experienced knights?" Meeko echoed. He paused, renaming the knights the king had called to himself. "Heck! You're right. Maybe it was a mistake."

Tamir groaned, writhing his paws around anxiously. "Well, only one way to find out, eh? Tell me all 'bout it after dinner, 'kay?" Meeko laugh, patting Tamir on the back as he slowly sat up.

My life is like a horror film, and I'm the monster that makes it scary. It seems that my life is nothing but things you'd see in a horror film, besides zombies and ghosts. Our kingdom, Blackfire kingdom, is as ruthless as they get. We're strong, so it seems no one can say otherwise. Our king is no better. He's blunt, thoughtless, and probably a bit insane. Everyday we fight and win. Then we fight, die, and win again. Then we fight, die, kill, and win some more. No one dares go against Blackfire kingdom, not that we give them a choice. It's either go against us or let us kill them. We spare no one; we hardly even spare the citizens. Anyone who gets caught up in the war or who resists us gets killed, innocent or not. The survivors we bring into our kingdom and torture with our spoiled food and high taxes. We, the knights, are called murderers by our own citizens. How

wrong is it to be mocked by someone you fight to protect? Just today I was called "Papa's killer" by a young mouse. Probably by someone from a different kingdom, but it made me think. Why do I fight? I fight because the king tells me to..._

* * *

>Thanks for reading my first fanfic! Sorry if the chapters seem long. I can't help it(it's the way I write). I also can't judge how many chapters this story will be or when I'll upload chapters. Just rest assure it won't be one chapter a week. Stay tuned for Chapter 2: Not Gonna Give Up. Oh yeah, review, please! Emails are also fun. <div>

2. Chapter 2: Not Gonna Give Up

****Chapter 2: Not Gonna Give Up****

"Welcome, my loyal knights! I am pleased to see you are all here." The five knights were greeted by the gruff voice of the king as they entered the royal dinning room. In front of them was a very long table with more than enough plates and utensils. The king sat at the far end, wearing a long majestic cloak.

"Please seat yourselves," they heard him say after they respectfully bowed before him. Naturally, they all sat separated. It wound up being with two knights on each side of the long side of the table and one opposite the king's side. Tamir dared not sit there. He was the most inexperienced out of the five knights and he'd do his best to show respect.

It happened to be that out of the five knights, the most experienced one, Kai, had sat opposite the king. Tamir noticed this right away. Maybe one day he'd be experienced enough to sit there.

"As you all know, I have summoned you here to explain a very important mission I have for you allâ€| individually," the king began. "Individually, your honor?" Kai echoed. The king nodded. Tamir was surprised that the king hadn't gotten angry at Kai for interrupting him.

"I need all of you to travel far out; far out to the north, south, east, and west." The king had actually pointed to four of the knights as he said this. The finger had landed on Tamir when he said "east". "Kai shall go northwest, where I hear a mysterious group of gerbils have been seen lurking around," the king ordered.

"Yes, your majesty," Kai replied. "I want you all to travel far out in your direction on this mission. Find any kingdoms you can, disguise yourselves as peasants and learn all of their secrets and skills. You shall all return by the time two full moons have passed," the king continued. "You shall leave tonight. Understood?"

"Sir!" the knights cheered. Tamir's heart flipped when the king finished. Tonight? Why so soon? Could he not even say goodbye to his friends? It seemed so. The king, as if in some sort of rush, hurried the knights to the stables outsides. There he gave them money, food, weapons, and armor they'd need for the journey.

And, before he knew it, Tamir and the others had saddled up their cats and rode off in their separated directions. Tamir was upset that he could not see Meeko before he left. What if this mission turned out to be a disaster for him? What if he couldn't make it back? What if he died? These questions haunted his mind all night as he rode off into the darkness.

Tamir had settled down in a tree branch that night. His cat was tied up at the tree's huge roots. The Blackfire kingdom's territory was known for its huge, unique trees. As long as these were around, Tamir knew he was still home. But he wouldn't be for long.

The sound of a startled crow aroused him from his slumber. It was early morning now. He looked down to see his Bengal cat apathetically pawing at a nearby bush. He crawled down the tree trunk and stretched. "I suppose we ought to get going," he muttered as he grabbed his cat's harness, which neatly fit around its small muzzle like one would for a horse. He got on its saddle and snapped the halter reins. "Mit!" he said sharply, and the cat was off running.

The Bengal cats around where Tamir lived were like horses in their own way. They could run for miles as long as they were full and quenched. Only the knights rode the Bengal cats, and only Bengal cats would the knights ride. They were the only cats around, plus the only ones wild enough that they actually could be tamed and ridden. Tamir had named his Ben.

It had started to rain after a few hours of riding and the two were forced to take shelter under the long leaves of the shrubs. "I think I smell waterâ€¦ I mean, lots of it," Tamir said quietly. He had never smelt so much water at once before. It had a strange tang to it. Common sense held him back from going out to see where it was coming from. Plus, Tamir hated getting wet.

The rain lasted all night. Eventually, Tamir and Ben moved up a tree to escape the muddy ground. They filled up on some old corn that had been packed up and given to Tamir by the king. It was all too obvious that he hadn't been too thoughtful about what to pack.

By morning the rain had stopped and Tamir was bid good morning by silently falling water droplets on wet leaves. "A day has already gone by and I'm not even sure if we're still in Blackfire kingdom territory, let alone if we're still going eastâ€¦ We only have two months."

The two were off again before long. This time, Tamir headed toward the scent of water he caught the night before. It wasn't long before they reached it. A huge, never ending field of dark blue water stretched out before them. Tamir had to rub his amber eyes to make sure he wasn't seeing things.

How could something like this be real? Quickly, he hopped off of Ben and dashed across the sand that separated him from the water. He got as close as he could to the water without actually touching it. He immediately jumped back when a small wave of water licked the sand he was standing on, painting it dark brown.

When another wave came, Tamir carefully scooped up a pawful of water and drank it, only to spit it out. "Gross! It'sâ€¦ salty?! I hate

salty stuff," he hissed with a grimace. He padded back to Ben, who had obediently watched him from where he was left.

Figured. That would've been an unlimited supply of water, had it been drinkable. "Oh well. I guess I ought to tell the king that I couldn't go any farther," Tamir sighed. Even though, he didn't want to go back. What if the king thought he was lying? That he was just lazy, or scared? "I wonder if there's a way across."

Tamir spent most of the day just staring at the ocean, listening to its hissing, and wondering if there was some magical way to just walk on it. He wondered if there was even anything on the other side. He couldn't see anything.

The sun was beginning to set by the time Tamir gave up. He got up, sighed, and began to now wonder how he'd explain to the king how he failed his first special mission as he padded back to his cat. A sudden, deep roar froze him in his tracks. Slowly, he turned around.

It wasn't close, but not out of sight, either. Something small, or maybe big, was on the water. Floating? Impossible. How could something so strange do that? With such a roar, it must've been big.

"A boat," Tamir said to himself. Something made by man. Of course! Man: masters of balance and everything that made no sense. They defied nature. They could do anything.

Tamir had never seen man, but his grandfather had told him all about them. They were never a threat to hamsters unless they decided to destroy their forests. Other than that, they were usually ignored. Because of this many civilians of Blackfire kingdom have come to believe that man don't exist at all.

But the boat was so far away. Tamir would never be able to get to it. "But why would man want to walk on water? Unless there's something else out thereâ€¦" He gulped. Now he'd feel guilty if he turned back. East didn't end here. It went on, much farther on.

"I have to get to that ship!" He turned around and quickly began picking up rubbish from the beach. He put together pieces of trees and barks like a puzzle. He glued them together with tree sap. This was something his grandfather had also taught him to do. Tree sap made good glue and wood almost always floated.

"C'mon, Ben," Tamir said as he pushed the big, unsteady raft toward the ocean. The cat stared at him unbelievably. "I know you hate water, but you have to come, too. Come on!" He padded over to Ben and tugged at his halter, forcing him on the raft, then waited for another wave to come.

It lifted them from the ground as if it were a hand and carried them to the ocean. So far everything was going according to how Tamir had hoped. "All right! We haven't sunk yet! We're floating!" He cheered. Ben crouched down, shivering, his nails digging into the wood. Tamir looked at the boat, which still looked so far away. "I'm not gonna give up."

* * *

>Chaptah 2! Sorry if it seems like I'm rushing things. The story doesn't really start until Tamir meets the Ham-Hams, and that'll take a few chapters. Keep watch for Chapter 3: The World of Man. Oh yeah, and if it seems like I'm using "man" strangely in sentences, I'm doing it on purpose. Tamir's word "man" is plural, so that's how I'll type it until the word "human" is introduced.

3. Chapter 3: The World of Man

****Chapter 3: The World of Man****

Unfortunately, by the time the raft had gotten to the ocean, it was dark. Tamir and Ben were so tired that they actually managed to fall asleep. They didn't wake up until another, deep, blasting roar sounded suddenly from directly above them. Both nearly fell off the raft in shock.

Tamir quickly looked up to see the boat so close he could almost touch it. "Yes! Come on, Ben!" He said as he tried to steer the raft closer with his tiny paws. Once close enough, he scrutinized the boat to find a way to climb to the top.

"It's all slimyâ€¦ no where to climb." Tamir sighed. He got to the boat, but now how would he get on? Before he could think much, Ben suddenly yowled, making Tamir look up again. A huge net was falling straight at them.

Neither could move to escape before it crushed their raft and forced them into the water. They desperately struggled to untangle themselves from the rope and swim for the surface. They held onto the net to keep afloat.

Tamir looked up the net to see a rope which led to the top of the boat. "Perfect!" He quickly climbed out of the water and up the rope. Less enthusiastically, Ben followed. It was tiresome, but the two managed to make it to the top and flop down to the boat's deck like fish.

They couldn't stop now, though. Huge feet were stomping all over the deck. Tamir could only let a second go by to look up at the men before making a dash for shelter under some storage boxes.

"It's man," he mumbled. He was more fascinated than scared. Ben shivered behind him. "Hey, none of our supplies were ruined, right?" Tamir asked, turning around and examining the bag he had tied to Ben when they first left. Luckily, nothing in it couldn't get wet without being ruined. He sighed and sat down. "I wonder how long until this boat reached land again," he yawned.

The answer to that question wasn't friendly. The boat ride took five long days and five long nights. Five days of seasickness and salt flavored food. When they had finally reached land Tamir didn't know it until he saw the man walking off the boat. At first he thought they were going for a swim. After following them, he saw that next to the ship was a strange, gray surface; but it was solid nonetheless.

He and Ben immediately departed the boat and would've kissed the

ground in relief, had it been natural ground. "Why do you think the ground is sharp and gray, Ben?" He asked, picking at it with a claw.

It looked as if millions of tiny stones had been stuck together. Some stones were sharp, and hurt his paws. "Let's hurry, Ben," Tamir said, climbing on his cat's back. He snapped the reins and they were off.

They departed from the smell of low tide and the dangers of man's stomping feet. They stopped behind a huge, shiny, smelly object in a dark alleyway. Tamir had to take a moment to let this all sink in. Man was everywhere. This place was infected with them. Luckily, none had taken any notice to him. Hopefully they never would.

Tamir peaked around the corner to examine everything that was happening. A large amount of man were walking around the boat. They took large boxes on and off of it.

Fascinating, strange creatures rolled passed a little further away from the boat. They were shiny, too. Man must've liked shiny thing, Tamir thought. He cautiously approached the area the speedy creatures were staying on.

This time, instead of hard grey ground, it was hard black ground. It had an odd scent to it, as did the cars. It hurt his nose and Ben's too, apparently. When Tamir had gone to touch the black ground, one zipped past him so fast that a gust of wind blew him right off his feet.

It only took so long until Tamir realized that none of the cars were leaving the black ground. They were constantly going in one direction on one side and the other on the other side. They ignored him like the man did.

He had to force Ben to come closer. They had to cross the street; there was no where for them to go on this side. He gathered up all of his courage and stepped into the street. It was silent.

Ominously, no cars were going by. A perfect chance! Tamir doubted those fast cars would stop for him as much as those man would. Pulling Ben behind him, Tamir dashed across the street. Of course, Ben's resistance slowed him down, and he knew it was only a matter of time until another car appeared.

Then he heard it; the roaring of a distant car coming their way. They were more than halfway across the street by now, but unfortunately that was the side the car was coming from.

Tamir tugged Ben more forcefully, but the frightened cat still refused to move. Before Tamir could even try to dodge, the car had dashed over them. He managed to look up at its dark underside for but a second, before it was gone. If he hadn't been so small, the car would've smashed into him.

Just when he thought he could sigh with relief, Ben screeched in terror, spun around, and dashed off. Tamir was still holding his reins, making him come along for the ride.

Tamir could only hold onto the reins for a few seconds before he fell

off. Ben didn't stop. The cat was running so fast that he was out of view before Tamir could even stand up. He had fallen off of Ben on the other side of the street, leaving that problem solved but making another. Now Tamir had to make the rest of the journey on paw.

It took hours of walking and avoiding man until he finally spotted an area of something natural; a park. It was a large square of spaced out trees, lines of grey ground, and a few of man. He quickly dash under the fence surrounding it and into a bush.

It felt good to see something familiar, but it still felt so unfamiliar. A sudden bark made him jump.

He peaked outside to see a man and a dog passing by. The dog had a leash going from a collar around its neck to the man's hand. It was like Ben's halter, only less controlling.

Tamir had never seen a dog or even knew what one was. A few wolves would wonder into Blackfire kingdom territory every now and then and foxes had once become a big predator problem. This creature hadn't the body of a wolf or a fox. It walked carelessly and had lazy ears. Its eyes looked as if it were sleeping.

Such creatures could be no threat, right? Tamir wondered. He took his chance. He left the safety of the bush and went over to the sidewalk when the man had passed. The surface felt only slightly better on the paws, but grass was still much preferred.

He began sniffing the ground for food. Ben had been carrying all of his supplies when he ran off. All Tamir had now was his bandana, which was of no use for food. "Urf?" A questioning noise behind him made Tamir freeze. He slowly looked over his shoulder to see a big, brown and white dog staring at him. He dared not move.

The dog didn't move either. Tamir was counting the seconds they stared at each other. The dog had a collar on and a leash was attached to it, too. But where was its man? Tamir had figured that all dogs belonged to man after seeing that one.

The dog then stepped forward, making Tamir's long fur bristled wildly. It lowered its floppy eared head and brushed its wet, black nose into his fur. It sniffed him a few times. Tamir's first impulse would've been to scratch at the creature's nose, then run while it was yelping. But this wasn't a creature familiar to him. What if scratching it enraged it like it did for birds? What if it chased him around the park?

"Brandy, there you are! I've been looking everywhere for you," someone, or something, said. But all Tamir understood was gibberish. The source of the speech was none other than man. Its voice, for some reason, made the dog lower its body in submission. The man picked up the dragging leash, making the dog stand up again.

Tamir was still frozen stiff. He twitched when the man looked at him. "Oh, a hamster!" It squeaked. Its high voice rang in Tamir's ears. He finally broke out of his stunned trance when the man reached for him. He squeaked in fright and dashed off, not daring to see if the man was following him.

* * *

>Chapter (sneezes) three! Ughâ€¦ I feel terrible. Haven't been up to working on this fic 'cause of my Cold. Anyway, don't forget to review! And keep in touch for Chapter 4: Friendly Beast.

4. Chapter 4: Friendly Beast

****Chapter 4: Friendly Beast****

By the time Tamir had stopped it was getting dark. Instinct had driven him blindly across streets, man's feet, and the like. Now he was in a quiet area. The streets were silent and the sidewalk was empty, except for his tiny figure. Hedges grew on the other side of the sidewalk so long and tall that he thought they were never-ending.

Tamir stood there, catching his breath, for a few moments, before deciding to crawl into the hedge next to him. It wasn't as thick as it was long, but it was still a challenge to get through. Small twigs kept catching on his long fur.

After getting through, Tamir put the urge to groom his fur behind him. He examined his new surroundings. There was grass, another smaller road to the right, more hedges to the left, and an enormous wood-made object a distance in front. Looking up it almost made Tamir fall over. Though it was fascinating, it still wasn't as tall as the other buildings he saw when first entering man's territory.

In front of the house was a smaller version, a much smaller version. But it was still much bigger than Tamir. Most things in man's world seemed to be. And then he realized something. He hadn't seen any other hamsters since coming into this huge territory. Surely no kingdoms could settle in peace with so much man everywhere.

As Tamir was thinking, he didn't notice the large figure emerging from the small house. By the time he did realize it was there, its shadow had made its way over his body and its large head was lumbering over him. "A-ah!" Tamir yelped, staggering back.

Before he could get very far, the creature lowered its head and opened its mouth, revealing rows of sharp teeth. Tamir flinch, which, he knew, was the worst possible thing a knight could do. He was just asking for death. But that wasn't what came to him. Instead, a huge wet tongue lifted him off of his feet and plopped him back on the ground.

Tamir sat there on the grass, staring at the creature, stunned. The creature swiped a paw over its tongue. Some of Tamir fur had stuck to it. It was then that Tamir realized that this creature was the same exact brown creature he had been running from from what felt like only a few minutes ago.

"Arf!" the dog barked, wagging its short tail. Tamir did nothing. He just kept staring at the dog, mouth agape. The dog bent over again. This time, Tamir back up. He didn't want to get all of his fur wet and smelly. But the dog gently pushed its nose into his fur instead. It sniffed a few times, and then lifted its head to bark again.

Tamir didn't know what to think of this. Why hadn't this creature eaten him yet? The dog sat and stared down at Tamir. The hamster didn't move, he just stared back. It was a few minutes of this staring until the dog suddenly crouched down, its rear up.

Tamir twitched. This position was commonly made by untamed cats who wanted to make a meal of something small. He quickly put a paw to his left side, but then remembered that his cat had run off with all of his stuff, and that included his sword.

Tamir watched helplessly as the dog lifted one of its huge paws and towered it over him. Slowly, it descended until it was touching his head. Only then did he act. In a desperate attempt to get out of this situation alive, he bit down onto one of the dog's toes.

The large creature yelped and bounced around, throwing its paw high in the air. Tamir held on tight, knowing that if he let go, not only would the dog get him, but he'd also go flying. After a bit of thrashing and barking, the dog eventually calmed down. Tamir had his eyes tightly closed. He dared not look at the probably furious monster.

But instead of eating Tamir right off of its toes, it slowly limbed toward its little house, not lowering the paw Tamir was holding. It entered the house and lay down. The sudden sense of a different scenery made Tamir open his eyes. The sight made him gasp and let go of the toe, which the dog quickly drew under its chest protectively.

Tamir quickly back up until his back hit the wall. The dog looked so much bigger in the little house, and yet somehow so less aggressive. Without barking, sniffing, licking, or anything, the dog lowered its head to its paws and closed its eyes. Tamir wrinkled his nose disbelievingly. It must be some sort of trick. Yeah. Once Tamir tried to get out, the creature would go to eat him. But why go through all of that trouble when the dog could've eaten him before?

As he was thinking, the dog's breath became quiet and slow. Was it really sleeping? It must've been trying to give him a false sense of security! Not even the foxes around Blackfire Kingdom were that smart.

Tamir gulped as he slowly padded around the dog's face and made for the exit. The dog made no movements. Tamir let out a big sigh when he was outside. "That was weird!" A light tap on his head made him jump in surprise. "What was that?" He asked himself, rubbing his head. His fur was wet.

He raised a paw slightly to the sky. Light rain was beginning to fall. "Great," he grumbled. It was steadily getting heavier. "I hate water, I hate getting wet, I hate rain." He was so busy complaining that he didn't notice the dog get up again and turn around. It made a quiet whimper, making Tamir spin around. Again, he reached for his left side, forgetting again that he didn't have his sword. "Darn it," he muttered.

The dog lowered its head and gently nipped Tamir's bandana. "H-Hey!" He yelled as he was lifted into the air. The dog turned around and went back into its house, where it dropped the hamster onto the

ground and lay down again. This time, it lay closer to Tamir so he was stuck between one of its paws and its face.

Tamir made little effort to get away. Now that he was comfortable and warm, he was suddenly getting very tired. "Wellâ€ this is more comfortable than sleeping in the rainâ€ even if this dog wants to eat me," he yawned. He tried to fight against sleep, but to no avail, he slowly closed his eyes.

* * *

>Well, I suppose there wasn't much to this chapter. It's pretty short, which is why I put it up so soon after chapter 3. Anywho... keep in touch for Chapter 5: Codename: "Ham-Ham Clubhouse"! <div>

5. Chapter 5: Codename: HamHam Clubhouse

Chapter 5: Codename: "Ham-Ham Clubhouse"

"Oopa! Whoa-- oof!"

These strange noises, along with a "thud" sound in-between, awoke Tamir from his slumber. "Jeez, Brandy, you should warn me that you're sleeping all the way in your doghouse." He blinked sleepily, before it suddenly hit him. He understood this voice! That means it must be a hamster.

He quickly struggled out of the dog's grip and peaked over one of its long ears. There it was; a white and orange hamster. It was brushing dirt off of its fur before it looked Tamir's way. "See ya, Brandy!" It called happily, waving. It apparently hadn't noticed Tamir as it ran off out of sight.

After a second or two, Tamir padded to the entrance of the small house and peaked out just in time to see the orange hamster disappear in some bushes. For a while, he just stared. Should he follow? What if there were other hamsters in that bush? Maybe he should just look for another hamster elsewhere.

Tamir then remember how he had spent the whole day before running through man's territory and seeing nothing but countless numbers of man and the strange fox/wolf creature behind him. He also thought about how lucky he was to have been invited into this warm house by this creature, even though he still didn't know its intentions for it.

His only chance to fulfill this mission in time was to take every chance he could. He looked back at the dog, who hadn't moved still. "Thank you for your hospitality," he said, bowing slightly, and added quietly, "even if you only intended to save me for lunch." Then he ran for the bushes where the orange hamster had disappeared to.

Tamir tried to be as quiet as possible, but twigs were always catching on his long fur and making the bush rustle. There was a small opening of bare dirt under the bush. A small hole had been dug in the center. It stunk of hamster as Tamir got closer. The hamster must've gone down there.

Dare he follow? Might as well walk right into the enemy's castle, he thought. But how else could he follow? He took a deep breath, as if about to dive in water, and hopped into the hole. The ground wasn't far from entrance and a dark tunnel revealed itself in front of Tamir. He gulped and padded onward.

The tunnel was very quiet and empty, making him more anxious by the second. What if he was walking right into a trap? What if he was already in a trap? What if there were traps in this tunnel he was walking down? What if hamsters were hidden underground, just waiting for trespassers like him to jump out at?

As these thoughts ran through his mind, Tamir didn't notice the turns the tunnel was making. Even though, he subconsciously turned anyway. Went reaching a fork turn, he randomly picked one, as of not noticing the second tunnel. Only when the tunnel started widening did Tamir return to reality. He stopped.

Against the dirt tunnel walls hung pictures of hamsters. One of the pictures was that orange hamster he saw before. Above all of the pictures was a sign that said, "Ham-Ham Clubhouse". Tamir cocked his head. Clubhouse? Must be a guild. Usually only citizens belonged to guilds. At the end of the row of pictures and the end of the tunnel was a door. It had a window in the upper-center.

A smarter hamster would've probably turned and left. Tamir walked up to the door and looked through the window, hardly daring to breath. Inside was a large room. The ground was green, but not grass. In the middle was a round table with a few chairs around it. He counted them. 1, 2, 3â€¦ 10. Ten chairs. Not a lot of members for a guild.

Next to the table was a black box on a smaller table. The center of the black box was shinier than the rest, which puzzle Tamir. Across the room were a few closed doors. He looked up. The walls were made of hard dirt. Near the back of the room was a ladder, which led up the wall to a ledge. On that ledge was another ledge closer to the ceiling.

On that top ledge was a blue basket big enough for one hamster to fit in. It was attached to a rope, which led all the way around the room, like a slide. Speaking of slides, there was a real one on the other side of the ledge the ladder was on.

Tamir twitched his ears in irritation. It looked more like a playhouse than a clubhouse, let alone a guild. But he saw no hamsters. He put his paw to the doorknob, turned it, and opened the door so slowly that it must've taken two minutes until it was open enough for him to squeeze through.

The whole room was filled with different scents of hamsters. Strange, Tamir thought. Most hamsters in a kingdom smelt the same. He then went off exploring. He looked under and over the table and chairs. He examined the strange black box, which sounded hollow when he tapped it, but the shiny part sounded much different. There were buttons on the bottom, but Tamir dared not touch them.

He then went for the closed doors, but each was tightly locked. Most likely no one was in, anyway. He turned and climbed up the ladder to

the ledge. Not much was up there, at least, not much familiar to him. A muffled groan and a yawn made him jump. "W-What was that?" He quietly asked himself. He crouched on all fours and peaked over the edge of the ledge. He hadn't even noticed it before. At the corner of the right side of the room was a red and blue striped sock. Out of it stuck a brown and white hamster's head. It wasn't moving and its eyes were closed.

Quickly, Tamir climbed down the ladder and approached the hamster. "You're new, aren't you?" It muttered without opening its eyes. Tamir only stared at it. How could it talk to him so calmly without even opening its eyes? Was this a knight? Were these knights so skilled that they didn't even have to look at their enemies to know they could beat them?

There was a pause of silence. "Who are you?" The brown hamster asked after hearing no reply. "U- umâ€¦ I'm, uhâ€¦" Tamir stammered, wondering if he should give his real name. Well, of course not. He was there to spy on another kingdom. Spying meant guising himself as someone else and making the enemy trust him.

Plus, what if they recognized his name? Sure, he wasn't exactly known around kingdoms, but Blackfire kingdom certainly was. His kingdom had no allies, but was still very powerful. In other words, everyone hated them. They'd do anything to get a prisoner and have Blackfire kingdom do what they want. _Phhft_, as if Blackfire kingdom would actually do anything, Tamir thought. Knights and civilians had been kidnapped a few times before. But they all wound up being killed because the king would do nothing to save them and the opposing kingdom didn't want them.

Tamir bit a nail. He didn't want to be kidnapped and killed. "Who are you?" The brown hamster repeated with a yawn. "I-I'mâ€¦ umâ€¦ Yu--no, umâ€¦" Tamir thought hard for a name. "Kaâ€¦ Kaito. Y-Yeah. My name is Kaito," he finally answered, looking proud of himself. Another silent pause made him frown. "I'm sorryâ€¦ what?" the hamster suddenly asked, making Tamir nearly fall over.

"My name is Kaito!" Tamir repeated, clenching a fist in irritation. "Oh, I seeâ€¦ I'm called Snoozer," the brown hamster replied. Tamir thought for a moment. Snoozer? What kind of name was that? Was it also a fake name? Did this hamster know he was lying? Well, at least Tamir was better at making up names, he thought. Even though "Kaito" wasn't a fake name. It had been his grandfather's name.

"The Hams will be here soon, if you want to stay," Snoozer muttered. "Hams?" Tamir echoed. Perhaps "Hams" was what this kingdom called their knights. Although Blackfire kingdom never named its knights anything special. He decided to ask, just in case.

"Um, Snoozerâ€¦ -san?" Tamir began. He thought it would be better to be respectful and get on this hamster's good side. Another silent pause went by. "Snoozer-shiiâ€¦?" Still no reply. "Snoozer-sama?"

"Ah, I like the way that soundsâ€¦ Snoozer-samaâ€¦" Snoozer finally said. "Well, um, I wanted to askâ€¦ Who are these 'hams'?" Tamir asked. "They're my friends," Snoozer answered simply. "Friends" was an odd way to address fellow knights. Most knights had no time for a social life, so they had no friends anyway. Tamir's only friend was

Meeko.

"They can be your friends, too, if you stay," Snoozer said.
"R-Really? Then I guess I will stay," Tamir replied quietly.
"Snoozer-sama? When will they be here, if you don't mind me asking?" He asked. Snoozer seemed to like being called "Snoozer-sama" as he smiled slightly. "They should be here soon. They're on a picnic," he answered with another yawn.

Tamir's ears twitch again in irritation. A picnic? Maybe it was another fake name? This kingdom seemed to be very secretive. The 'hams' were probably on a mission. He put a paw to his bandana in thought, and then looked down in surprise.

"Oh no!" Tamir yelped in a whisper. How stupid of him! Of course anyone would recognize the black fire on his bandana as the symbol for Blackfire kingdom. "Thank the hamster gods above that this hamster hasn't opened his eyes once yet," Tamir muttered as he took the bandana off. He quickly looked around. Where could he hide it where no one would look?

No matter where he looked he couldn't find a good place. Snoozer then mumbled to himself, making Tamir look back. Of course! He quickly walked over to the brown hamster. He had begun breathing softly, showing that he had fallen asleep at some point recently. Carefully, Tamir lifted the top of the sock off of Snoozer's back. The hamster had been sleeping on his stomach.

Tamir reached as far down in the sock as he could without actually going in it. Then he flattened out the bandana in it and look his arm out. Hopefully no one would look inside this sock for any reason. If Snoozer felt the bandana, the sleepy thing might just pass it off as nothing. And if Tamir was really lucky, Snoozer already had a blanket in there and might think the bandana was part of the blanket, but he hadn't seen a blanket when he was reaching in the sock.

With a sigh, Tamir turned around and stared at the door to the clubhouse. He had no idea what kind of greeting he was in store for, and he certainly never expected that he'd get the kind of greeting he did when the "hams" finally returned.

* * *

>Chapter 5! Yay! It's a long one. I think I spent too much time describing everything. Oh well. Anyway, as you can see, I'm using Japanese suffixes. For those of you who aren't familiar with them, I'll explain the one's I'll probably use in this fanfic: <p>-kun: Mostly used for boys and sometimes by boys for girls(though I've only seen it once in anime). It represents friendship and sometimes superiority if used by older men.<p>

-chan: Used mostly for girls(I couldn't imagine a boy wanting to be called this). It's a bit of childish cuteness, especially when used for animals(I'll probably only use it for girls by girls).

-san: A respectable and polite term used for someone of superiority. It basically means "Miss" and "Mister"(Tamir will be using this a lot).

-shii: Just a little more respectable than "san", but less

respectable than "sama(I've only heard it once in anime and probably won't use it again).

-sama: Very respectable term used to suppress great respect(not sure how much I'll use this one).

-dono: Probably the highest respectable term. It comes from the word "tono," which means "lord".

-sensei: You all know this, right? It basically means "teacher"(though literally it doesn't). I'll probably only use it for teachers by students.

No suffix can either represent closeness or an insult(basically it'd be used by very close friends or enemies| Boss "uses" this one a lot).

This might get a bit confusing, especially when human characters appear. For future reference I'll just say that I'm gonna use these suffixes as one would normally at school in Japan(of course, with the respect to a certain character's personality). For example, most girls will be called by their last names by boys(and sometimes with "san added). Boys will be called by their last names also(with "kun added). Girls will mostly call each other by their first names with "chan added, while some boys will call each other by their first names(with or without "kun).

Confused yet? It's complicated for me also, especially since I've started watching some Japanese episodes of Hamtaro and seen how differently certain characters call others. There's also the problem that some of the characters don't have last names in the English version(I'll have to go as far as to making up a last name for one character). Though Hamtaro certainly is a "different" anime when it comes to the humans' side(it's the first anime I've seen where the students don't have school uniforms). I promise I'll make it as less complicated as I can.

Anywho! Stick around for Chapter 6: Meeting the Ham-Hams!

6. Chapter 6: Meeting the HamHams

Chapter 6: Meeting the Ham-Hams

It wasn't too long after that when Tamir could hear voices behind the door. He stiffened. It must've been the "hams". The door was soon swung open harshly, making him jump. "Every time, Oxnard. Every time you gotta make a huge scene." The first hamster to walk in had an irritated, gruff voice. The hamster himself was the only thing making Tamir gap.

The first hamster was a tan color with a few dark brown markings. He wore a broken cup on his head and held a shovel. He was almost twice as big as Tamir. "I'm sorry, I could've sworn I saw a cat," another hamster replied in a shaking voice. "Everything is a cat to you" the bigger hamster's voice trailed off when he saw Tamir.

"Hey! Who invited you?" He snapped, pointing at him with his shovel. Tamir instinctively went into a defensive position. He lowered himself on all fours as his hackles rose. "His name is Kaito, Boss"

I let him in," a sleepy voice said behind Tamir. It was Snoozer, still unmoved. "Is that so?" Boss asked, lowering his shovel.

"What's going on?" The source of the shaking voice pushed past Boss. He was a chubby gray-blue and white splotched hamster. He was carrying a large sunflower seed. He didn't sound scared anymore. "Who're you?" He asked, cocking his head. Tamir let his fur lay back down, but he said nothing still.

"Snoozer says his name is Kaito," Boss answered instead. "Oh! Hey, Hamtaro-kun! Come over here," the chubby hamster called into the tunnel. "I'm coming," a young sounding voice replied. It sounded strikingly familiar to Tamir. Boss moved away from the door so that the hamster could come in. Tamir's eyes narrowed in surprise. It was the same white and orange hamster from before. He looked at Tamir in surprise, then made a big smile. Quickly, to Tamir's alarm, he got closer to him until they were nose to nose.

"Hamha! My name is Hamtaro. Welcome to the Ham-Ham Clubhouse. What's your name?" Hamtaro said it all very quickly, but pleasantly. He held out a welcoming paw. Tamir slowly stood up and stared at the paw. "My name's Kaito," he finally answered, shaking Hamtaro's paw.

"Yay!" Hamtaro's sudden yell and jump startled "Kaito". "Are you here to join the clubhouse?" He asked with a huge smile and sparkling brown eyes. "Uh!" "Kaito" didn't know how to reply.

"If you want, you can meet the rest of the Ham-Hams first. They're still at the park. We just came back 'cause Oxnard here had another episode." Boss' voice sounded much friendlier now.

"I did not! I just got hungry. Yeah! I got hungry," Oxnard replied, running to a table in the corner that Kaito hadn't noticed. There was a pile of sunflower seeds on it. Instead of saving his energy and eating the one he was holding, Oxnard took a sunflower seed from the pile, unshelled it, and threw it in his mouth. He looked at Kaito, who was closest to him. "Want one?" He asked with a full mouth, handing him a seed. "Ah! no. I'm not hungry," he lied. In truth, Kaito was very hungry, but he had never seen such a seed and didn't really like trying out new things.

"Shall we get going sometime today?" Boss said impatiently. "Okay, okay," Oxnard replied, stuffing a few seeds in his cheeks for the trip. "You'll like the other Ham-Hams. They're all really nice," Hamtaro said to Kaito. He only nodded in response.

The four hamsters then left the strange room and into the dark tunnel. The three seemed to know exactly where they were going. This time, Kaito tried to memorize every turn they made, but he found it hard with so many of them. In little time, though, they reached the end of the tunnel.

Once outside, Kaito looked up and behind him too see that he was not in the same area he was when he first went into the tunnel. This was in a forest, near the edge of a cliff. The tunnel entrance was under a few huge tree roots.

"This way," Boss said, starting into the forest. Oxnard quickly

followed. "C'mon," Hamtaro said to Kaito when he saw he was still looking at the clubhouse entrance. "O-Okay!" He replied quietly, turning to follow the others.

In a further area of the forest, where trees were more spread out and dirt trails curves here and there, someone yelled in excitement. It came from an orange-yellow hamster with white under-parts and the stripes of a tiger. He spun around on his green skateboard, zipping past a hamster that looks almost exactly like him.

"Oniichan! Watch where you're going! You almost ran over my paw," the "twin" exclaimed angrily, revealing a valley-girl accent. Actually, she was his twin; Stan and Sandy. Closer comparison would show that Sandy was shorter than Stan and that Stan's fur was slightly darker. Sandy also had a bit of long fur covering her tail, which was tied at the end with a small red ribbon.

Sandy watch as her brother disappeared from sight, completely ignoring his sister. Sighing, she looked over at the sound of two loud voices. "Pashmina-chan!" One called. "Oh, Pashmiiina-chan!" another repeated. The first looked similar to Oxnard, and yet very different. He was gray with white under-parts, but wore brown-orange ringed glasses and a red bow in front of his neck. The second was brown with white under-parts. He wore a red apron and had a big pair of buck teeth, along with a strong Southern accent.

Suddenly, the gray hamster turned to the brown one. "What do you think you're doing, Howdy? I'm looking for Pashmina-chan!" He growled. "Well, so am I. But I'll bet she'll be happier to see me, eh, Dexter?" Howdy mocked in reply. Dexter clenched his paws and Howdy did the same. The two glared at each other as Sandy approached them.

"What are you two doing now?" She asked indifferently, as if this were normal. "I'm gonna give Pashmina-chan these tasty acorns," Howdy replied, revealing a three acorns to Sandy. "That's what I'm going to give her!" Dexter said defiantly. "Not if I find her first!" Howdy challenged quickly. "Where is Pashmina-chan, anyway?" Sandy asked. The two rivals twitched.

"Oh, Pashmiiina-chan!"

"Pashmina-chan!"

Sandy sighed as the two continued calling her again. "Oh no. What if something happened to her?" Dexter suddenly said. "You know!" I haven't seen her in a while," Sandy mentioned mostly to herself. "What if she was attacked by a cat, or something?!" Howdy exclaimed.

"Oh nooo!!" The two yelled, making Sandy cover her ears. "Hey, listen, I'm sure she's fine. I haven't seen Penelope-chan, either. I'll bet they're together," she said quickly. "Either way, you guys should go looking for her instead of freaking out."

"That's right! I'll go look for her, like the chivalrous ham I am!" Dexter decided. "I dun' know what 'cheverlous' means, but I'm gonna be that times 10!" Howdy yelled. And the two ran off.

"Those twoâ€¦" Sandy shrugged and began turning around, but seeing and hearing someone behind her made her jump. "Maxwell-kun!" Sandy exclaimed in surprise, regaining her balance. "Ah! I'm sorry, Sandy. I didn't mean to scare you," a tall hamster replied quickly and a bit nervously. He was dark brown with white under-parts. Sandy smiled as he scratched behind his ear sheepishly. Sure, he was a book worm, but she loved him either way. Of course, she'd never say that out loud. Not yet, anyway.

"Is thereâ€¦ something you want?" She asked, not knowing where to look. "Oh, yes. Well, I was wonderâ€¦ since Stan is out girl-hunting, the Pashmina fans are looking for Pashmina, Hamtaro and the others went back to the clubhouse, and everyone else is goneâ€¦ well, I was wonder if you'd like to spend timeâ€¦ with me," Maxwell stammered, scratching his ear the whole time. "Unless, of course, you're busy." He looked slightly disappointed, as if he already knew she was busy.

"No! I love to-- I meanâ€¦ I'd really like to spend time with you," Sandy answered quickly. She wasn't just ready to use the "L" word around him. "Great! Should we go to the beach? Or take a walk around the park? Or--" Maxwell began, but stopped abruptly when Sandy held his paw. "Let's take a walk," she said, smiling. "O-Okay," Maxwell stammered, blushing. The two walk off, leaving that area of the forest empty.

* * *

>Some words to know: <p>Oniichan: Literally means "elder brother". The â€"chan is added in affection. Little children may sometimes call older boys this. â€"niichan is added at the end of a name when included.<p>

Ooneechan: "Elder sister". Again, the â€"chan is added in affection. Little children will sometimes call older girls this. â€"neechan is added at the end of a name when included.

Imoto: "Younger sister"(I don't know much about this word, it's just what Stan calls Sandy).

Okaasan: "Mother". It's sometimes shortened to 'kaasan.

Otousan: "Father". Sometimes shortened to 'tousan.

Yeahâ€¦ well, keep it touch for chapter 7: Misunderstood Indifference!

7. Chapter 7: Misunderstood Indifference

Chapter 7: Misunderstood Indifference

"Here we are!" Boss said as they entered the open area of the forest. Kaito had expected to see a lot of hamsters, but he saw no one. Perhaps they were hiding. "Hellooooo?" Boss called out impatiently. There was no answer. "They all left," Onxard said, sounding upset. "No, they didn't! They wouldn't leave without saying good-bye. C'mon, let's look for them." Hamtaro sounded very positive with his reply. He grabbed Kaito's paw and began running around the park. His sudden

turns almost made Kaito trip every now and then.

Hamtaro suddenly let go. "You look that way," he said, pointing to his right. Kaito twitched an ear. He wouldn't usually tolerate someone other than his king ordering him around, but considering how undemanding Hamtaro sounded, he obeyed.

_I wonder in these "friends" are as careless as those three... _Kaito thought, looking around. No way! They must've just been testing him. Yeah. They were probably seeing if he was skilled enough to find them. _I'll find them!_

With that, Kaito rapidly began climbing trees and checking bushes. He clawed a tree bark to see if maybe the hamsters were camouflaging themselves. But he found no one.

_Maybe these hamsters really have nothing to do with a kingdom... _Kaito hit himself over the head. No! They were just really cautious and secretive. Because they lived with man they had to be!

Kaito was taken away from his thoughts by a weird noise. "Ookyoo, ookyoo," something chimed. Kaito looked around the tree he was near. A strange creature was hopping past him. It looked like it wore a yellow cloth around it, but Kaito couldn't tell. If it was, then there were small holes by its mouth and eyes so it could speak and see. Its brown hamster ears were sticking out of the top. In a few seconds, it was gone.

"What in the name of Guroki was _that_?" Kaito whispered. "Ookwee!!" Something suddenly screeched. Kaito hesitated to follow the cry. It led him to the edge of a cliff. He looked over to see that the yellow creature from before had somehow fallen over the cliff and gotten its "cloth" stuck on an isolated branch sticking out of the dirt wall. The cliff wasn't very high, but still high enough for a hamster to get severely hurt if they fell.

The yellow creature was screaming and struggling with its eyes tightly closed in fear. The branch was beginning to snap from its movements and its cloth was starting to tear. Kaito wasn't sure which would make the small creature fall first.

Despite its terrified cries, Kaito did nothing. He watched it with cruel indifference, as if waiting for it to fall. Many times Kaito thought it was about to, but he never moved. He held a calm, normal expression, as if he was used to watching creatures fight helplessly for their lives.

"What the hell are you doing?!" A voice suddenly yelled, making Kaito look over quickly. It was Stan, but, of course, all Kaito saw was a weird tiger-colored hamster. "Move it!" He demanded as he ran over and shoved Kaito out of the way, making him fall over.

"Penelope!" Stan called. The yellow creature quickly looked up, crying even more at the familiar face. Stan reached his paw down as far as he could, as Penelope reached up. He managed to grab her paw, but as he pulled up, her paw slipped out and he only had her cloth. Penelope grasped the cloth as tight as she could, as did Stan. But he wasn't in the right position to pull her up, Kaito noticed. At this rate, they'd both fall.

"Don't stand there. Help me!" Stan yelled toward Kaito, not daring to look away from Penelope. Kaito only backed away slightly. Realizing Kaito wasn't going to help, Stan gathered all of his energy and pulled up. It seemed to be successful, until the cloth got stuck on the branch again. Stan continued to pull as hard as he could as Penelope continued to cry.

Finally, with a suddenly snap, Stan fell over and Penelope was flung into the air. Kaito watched as she fell right on Stan's back. He really had expected them both to fall. She sat up and then looked at if she was about to start bawling. "Are you okay, Penelope?" Stan grunted, lifting his head. The familiar voice made the yellow creature smile. "Ookwee!" She squeaked, hopping off of Stan's back. "I'm glad," he sighed as he stood up, smiling. His face suddenly turned angry when he looked at Kaito.

"What's the matter with you?! Why didn't you help? We both almost fell!" He yelled. Kaito said nothing, as Penelope cocked her head. It looked as if she was really just a young hamster under a yellow cloth.

"Hey! What's going on?" A voice called. It was Boss. The three hamsters were running over, apparently having been attracted by all the yelling. "Why are you yelling at Kaito-kun?" Hamtaro asked. "You know him?" Stan asked angrily.

"Yeah, he was at the clubhouse," Boss answered instead. He looked at Penelope's now dirty and shredded cloth. "What happened?"

"Penelope fell off of the cliff here and got caught on that branch. This idiot was just standing here and watching until I came and rescued her," Stan explained. "Hey! Don't insult Kaito-kun! He would never do that," Hamtaro defended, as if he knew Kaito.

"Yeahâ€¦ And why would Penelope just willingly just fall off a cliff?" Boss asked unbelievably. "I'm telling the truth! Right, Penelope?" Stan asked, looking at the young hamster. She suddenly raised her paws.

> "Ookwee, ookwee, ookyoo, ookwee," she explained. Kaito wondered if the four actually understood was this hamster was saying. "Anyone see interpreter Pashmina?" Boss asked, answering his question. Stan grinded his teeth, as if too impatient to prove what Kaito did.<p>

"Wasn't she looking for Penelope before we left?" Oxnard asked. "Yeah. I think she said she was going to look in the Tree Tunnel next," Hamtaro nodded. "Guess we'd better go look, then," Boss said.

* * *

>Meh, this chapter was kinda short. It's main purpose was to introduce Penelope, reveal a bit of Kaito's real personality, and form a rivalry between Stan and Kaito(though they're more like enemies right now). Anyway, stick around for chapter 8: Monster in the Tree!

****Chapter 8: Monster in the Tree****

Inside the Tree Tunnel padded a light brown hamster with white under-parts. She wore a pink scarf around her neck, which she was constantly shifting back and forth. Her eyes gazed anxiously from side to side. Where did that little hamster run off to?

She had searched all around the park for Penelope. This was the only other place she could think off. The Tree Tunnel was actually self-explanatory, really. It was just a huge tree with a tunnel at the entrance, similar to the Ham-Ham Clubhouse entrance, leading upward. The tunnel widened after not too long and led to a big half-wooden, half-dirt room. An area toward the upper-back was opened, where you could see the sky. There were many other tunnels leading through the tree. Many creatures enjoyed hanging out there.

There was a small railway to the far right. On it was a mining cart. Riding it would either bring you to a separate room underground where some hamsters liked to dig for rare rocks, or to the exit of the tree, depending on which way the handle next to it was turned.

"Penelope-chan!" The light brown hamster called. There was no answer. No one was in the tree right now, it seemed. Although, she could've sworn she heard a distant, repetitive banging noise. "Penelope-chan!" she repeated.

Suddenly, the banging stopped, making the light brown hamster look around. "Hey, Pashmina! Is that you?" someone called from above. Pashmina looked up. Above the railway were two tall, flat, separate ledges. The right ledge had the entrance to a tunnel that led further up the tree. The only problem was that the two flat ledges weren't connected, so one couldn't get to the side that led to the tunnel. The left ledge was easy to climb, but it was nearly impossible to climb the narrow right ledge.

Panda had happily volunteered to build a bridge across, despite the dangers the task held. He lived for building, nothing made him happier. It was obvious where Panda's name came from. He looked just like a real panda with his white fur and dark gray markings around his eyes, ears, and arms.

"Hamha, Panda-kun! Yes, it's me," Pashmina replied, waving. "What are you doing?" She asked, even though she already knew. "Building the bridge," Panda replied casually. "What are you doing here, Pashmina?" He asked. Pashmina suddenly twitched, as if remembering something. "Oh yeah! Have you seen Penelope-chan?" She asked.

Panda took a moment to think. "No, I haven't seen her," he answered. Pashmina began pacing nervously. "Ohâ€¦ where could she be?"

"Hold on! I'll help you look for her," Panda offered, beginning to climb down the ledge. "No, that's notâ€¦" Her voice trailed off when Panda was beside her. He was a pretty fast climber from working in high places so much lately. "Not what?" He asked, apparently having not been paying much attention to what Pashmina was saying when he was coming down.

"Wellâ€¦ since you're already down here," Pashmina said aside to

herself. Panda cocked his head. "Where did you look?" He asked. "Everywhere," Pashmina answered simply, looking around worriedly. "Oh, all rightâ€¦ then let's go this way first and ask around," Panda suggested, looking around before pointing to a tunnel.

They must've spent hours calling Penelope's name and asking if anyone had seen her. Deeper in the tunnels dwelled more hamsters, who all hadn't seen her, it seemed. After a while Panda had stopped calling for Penelope, feeling his voice begin to fade, but Pashmina kept going. He could feel her anxiety increase every time a hamster said they hadn't seen Penelope.

"Don't worryâ€¦ I'm sure she's fine," Panda tried to reassure when they reach the big room again. It was darker now, but still not night yet. "I mean, she's gotten lost before and nothing's happened to herâ€¦ well, there was that time she fell down that di-- I- I mean--!" Pashmina had started pacing frantically when Panda finished. "A ditchâ€¦ what if she falls down a ditch again," he muttered to herself. Panda watched her as he practically ran back and forth. She must've been so worried.

"We've looked everywhere!" She yelled, finally stopping and grabbing her head. "Notâ€¦ everywhere," Panda said, making Pashmina look at him. He looked up at the tunnel entrance on the right ledge. "There's a tiny hole over there where a very small hamster might be able to fit, but I don't think she-- Pashmina!"

Pashmina had immediately started walking to the hole at the bottom of the ledge after Panda pointed to it while talking. It would be a very tight squeeze, but maybe she could make it. "Pashmina, stop!" Panda yelled as she began forcing herself into the hole. "That area hasn't been explored yet! There could be dangerous things in there," he said, trying to pull her out.

All the more reason to save Penelope as soon as possible, Pashmina thought. Gathering all of her desperate energy together, she managed to get through the hole. Panda quickly grabbed her scarf before she went any further. "Let go!" Pashmina cried, pulling as hard as she could.

"No! Get out of there. I doubt Penelope's even there," Panda grunted, pulling at her scarf, too. But what if she was? Pashmina couldn't stand the thought of losing her best friend. She pushed herself further into the tunnel until he scarf eventually untied itself from around her neck, causing both her and Panda to fall.

Pashmina ignored Panda's calls to come back. She was blinded by worry by now. Her mind was filled with thoughts of how Penelope could get hurt. "Penelope-chan, Penelope-chan!" She repeated, panting.

The tunnel was starting to get very narrow until it was practically going directly up. Pashmina slipped a few times, hurting her nails as they skidded on the hard inside of the tree.

After what seemed like so long, Pashmina finally reached the end of the tunnel, but it was covered by something. "No! I'm not going back now," Pashmina gasped as she pushed at the strange object blocking her way.

It felt rough and sticky against her paws, but she still kept

pushing. With a loud grunt, Pashmina popped the object out of the hole. She immediately crawled out, as well, panting. She looked around.

The room she had just entered was very large and reminded her of a cave. She didn't even know the tree got this big, especially higher up; though it was hard to tell, since it was so dark. She looked up as she began walking, not noticing the lump in the ground in front of her.

"A-ah!" Pashmina squeaked as she fell over it. "What wasâ€¦" Her voice trailed off as she got up to look at what she had tripped over. With a loud gasp, she stumbled back. The object looked like a hairball, and it probably was, but there was something else in it besides hair. Bones; mice bones, to be exact. Only one creature hacked up mice like furballs.

Terrified, Pashmina began backing up, never taking her eyes off of the pellet, until she hit something. It was soft. Shivering, she looked behind her. A massive brown creature was right beside her. She screamed.

* * *

>-Yawns- Ah... the next chapter'll wrap up this junk... although it's a very long chapter... 'cause I ran into some trouble(chapter 9 was just gonna be very small, but instead I decided to add 9 and 10 together)... Anyway, chapter 9 should be up Saturday somewhat...
-Yawns- So early... Sh'yep, so stick around for chapter 9: How to Escape an Owl's Beak...! -Waves sleepily- <div>

9. Chapter 9: How to Escape an Owl's Beak

****Chapter 9: How to Escape an Owl's Beak****

But, despite her shrilling screech, the feathery creature did not move. It took Pashmina several minutes to regain her self-control and slowly back up. As quiet as possible, hardly daring to breath, she padded around the monster.

She couldn't help but to tightly close her eyes as she padded past its head. She was as small as the huge thing's beak. She was so concentrated on looking away that she didn't notice the creature open one of its eyes.

Pashmina almost sighed with relief when she passed the bird, but dared not, especially when she heard something move. She was too afraid to look behind her. But a strong stomp on the ground lifted her from the ground and forced her to turn.

"Now, now, what is this? Dinner visiting me? That's new," she heard the owl coo. It was even bigger standing up. Pashmina was smaller than its talons. It glared at her with its narrowed yellow eyes. The feathers on its head looked like ears. It was a Great Horned Owl, one of the worst out there.

It looked up for a moment. "The sun is still settingâ€¦ but now that I am awake I fear I will not be able to fall back asleep," it glared at Pashmina, "especially now that dinner is just a peck

away."

Pashmina was frozen stiff. Seeing this, the owl lunged forward. Pashmina's mind snapped awake at the last second and she dashed under the owl as its head hit the wall. It tried backing up to find her again, but she kept hidden under its feathers. The owl couldn't even spread out its wings in the nest, let alone fly.

It began stomping its talons around, forcing Pashmina to retreat in fear of being squashed. She tried to find the hole that led her there, but it was too dark to see anything. Before she knew it she had ran into a wall and was cornered. She pressed her back against the wall as the owl got closer, grinning. "No where to go now."

But, before the owl could do much, something flew from the other side of the nest and hit one of its eyes. It screeched in pain, stumbling over slightly, before looking behind it with its uninjured eye. "Hey! Why don't you pick on someone your own size?" Someone challenged.

Pashmina recognized the voice. It was Panda. She could just make out his shape a short distance away. The item he had thrown was his little hammer he was using to build the bridge. His right paw was clutching something, it seemed, but Pashmina couldn't tell what.

The owl turned around and stomped over to Panda. "Like _you_?" It replied with a hiss, looking at Panda so closely that its beak was pushing him back. "What? Oh, no. Not me... I'm much smaller than you," Panda said bravely with a sheepish smile.

The owl laughed. "Trying to play hero, eh? What's the point of showing up 'in the nick of time' if you can't back it up with anything useful?" Panda tapped his foot on the ground. "I'm working on it."

He sounded so confident, despite being stared down by a giant owl, Pashmina thought. She noticed his tapping his foot a little harder, as if trying to catch someone's attention... _Oh!_ Pashmina quietly made her way across the wall, away from the owl.

"How lucky of old Waizu. Now I have two delicious meals right in my bed," the owl grinned. "Not two," Panda replied. The owl raised an eyebrow. "Now!" Panda yelled, throwing his right arm forward. Pashmina could help but look back to see what was going on.

Something suddenly leaped out of a pile of owl pellets and dashed past the owl in amazing speed. Confused and surprised, the owl continuously turned around to try and keep its eye on it. While it was doing so, Panda ran toward Pashmina, waving his right arm oddly.

The owl then lunged for the quick thing, and, seeing that it successfully caught it, began tearing at it with its huge, sharp beak. It only took it a few seconds to realize what it was ripping apart wasn't an animal. It was a pink scarf with a thin wire attached to it, though it hardly looked like a scarf anymore.

Furious, the owl looked over to see Panda and Pashmina making a run for it. "I will not be out-witted by a rodent!" It snarled. Pashmina

could hear it stomping after them. They were approaching another wall, it looked like, but a dim light ringed the bottom slightly.

Panda wouldn't let her slow down, holding onto her paw tightly. "Hold on tightly!" Panda ordered, grabbing Pashmina around the waist. "Huh?!" She could only say in reply. Suddenly, Panda jumped, taking Pashmina with her, right at the wall. To Pashmina's surprise, they went right threw it. It seemed that the entrance to the owl's den was shielded by a bunch of leaves. Now they were falling from the towering tree, straight toward the ground. Pashmina screamed as Panda tried to think fast.

"You guys hear that?" Boss asked, stopping. The group had reached the Tree Tunnel entrance. It was dusk now. "Kinda sounds likeâ€| Pashmina," Oxnard replied. "Okwee, okwee!" Penelope suddenly screeched, pointing up. The six looked up to see Pashmina and Panda falling right towards them, a large bird close behind.

Before the Ham-Hams could think, the owl grabbed the two in its talons and swooping above them in a second. The breeze caused most of them to fall over. "Okwee, okwee!!" Penelope screamed, trying to run after the owl. Hamtaro and Oxnard stopped her. "Heyâ€| was that Panda-kun and Pashmina?" Stan asked, looking toward where the owl had disappeared from sight. Hamtaro looked around. "Where'd Kaito-kun go?"

Kaito was following the owl out of sight. He took short cuts here and there, trying to get in front of it. He could hear the two victims yelling. "Let go!" Panda growled, struggling to break free of the owl's strong talons. The owl ignored him.

With a growl, Panda bit the leg that was holding him. The owl screeched, slowing down. It raised its talon and glared at Panda. "You'll be the first to go," it hissed. Kaito took this chance and leaped at the owl once close enough. The bird screeched again.

It immediately dropping itself to the ground and looked at its tail feathers, then further behind it. Kaito was holding a large, brown feather, turning it in his paw, seeming uninterested in anything else. "So, more rodents dare to challenge me?!" The owl yelled angrily.

Kaito glanced at it. With a squawk, the owl flew up only about a foot from the ground and flew toward Kaito. It opened one of its talons, causing Pashmina to fall from it, and descended for Kaito.

Kaito saw this coming. He held the feather over his shoulder, pointing its quill toward the owl, like a spear. When the owl's talon was a mere few inches away, he threw it forward.

It pierced into the flesh of the owl's leg, making it impulsively close it and miss grabbing Kaito. It landed, keeping its now bleeding talon off the ground and squishing Panda to stand. The feather fell out of its foot with a bit of shaking.

"Rodents that fight backâ€| unbelievable," it cooed. Panda was finding it hard to breath under its weight. But then, to his

surprise, it became very easy. The owl had stepped off of him. "Hmmâ€¦ This may seemâ€¦ 'cheesy' of me, but in all my 40 years in this world I have not seen rodents show such resistance as you." It looked at Kaito first, then at Panda.

"Sacrificing fullness, I will let you go. But do not think next time I am out hunting I will be able to recognize you. All rodents look the same," the owl said. Panda stood up as Pashmina retreated to his side. Kaito still looked uninterested.

"Why are you letting us go?" Panda asked. "In this world, it is called 'survival of the fittest', or natural selection. Only the strong will live and pass on their traits to their offspring. That is why most predators go for the weakest of prey. Plusâ€¦" the owl grinned, "I found this evening to be most amusing. But now it is night and if I wish to have the energy to hunt tomorrow, I must hunt now. I suggest you seek shelter somewhere." With that, the owl flew off and circled them a few times.

"By the way, I am known in this and other forests as the Wise Old Owl, but you may call me Waizu. I always did believe in the story of the lion and the mouse," it called, before flying out of sight. Kaito walked over to the feather he had used as a spear. The stupid owl actually thought they'd help it if it was in need, even after it said it could come back to eat them, he thought.

"That was amazing!" Kaito looked up from the feather in surprise. Panda was approaching him with a smile. "The way you used that feather."

"Panda-kun was really amazing, too," Pashmina said, walking over. "You saved my life!" Her expression was much different then how it was in the tree. She had a big smile. Panda scratched the back of his head in embarrassment.

"It was nothing," he said. "No way! The way you tricked that owl was so smart," Pashmina insisted. Panda twitched, as if realizing something. "B-by the wayâ€¦ that thing I used to trick the owlâ€¦ I couldn't find anything else colorful to catch its attention, so I, uh, used your scarf." He fidgeted with his paws and stared down at them as he said this. Pashmina's reaction made Kaito jumped slightly.

"My _WHAT?!_" She screamed. Now she looked angry. "I-I'm sorry! There wasn't much time a-and I didn't know what else to do. I can make you a new one--"

"Ookwee!" Panda's stammering was interrupted by a very familiar squeak. Pashmina turned around quickly to see Penelope running toward her at full speed. "Penelope-chan!" She yelled, running over and hugging her little friend. "I was so worried!" Both were becoming teary.

Panda sighed with relief that Pashmina had turned away from him. "Hey, guys! What happened?" Boss yelled, as the rest of the group caught up with Penelope. "Ah, we were attacked by an owl, but this guy," Panda turned to Kaito, "helped saved us."

"My name is Kaito," Kaito corrected. "Okay then, Kaito-kun, thank you very much," Panda said, holding out a paw. Kaito was surprised. He

wasn't used to being thanked, especially by strangers. He slowly accepted the paw and shook it.

"No way _that_ guy saved you!" Someone yelled. Stan was making his way toward them. "This guy would've let Penelope fall if I hadn't been there!" He growled. "What?" Pashmina asked in surprise. "That's right! Tell 'em, Penelope."

"Ookwee, ookwee, ookyoo, ookwee," Penelope explained. "Hmmâ€¦ I see. You gotta be more careful!" Pashmina said. "What'd she say?" Boss asked. "She says she did fall over a cliff and Stan-kun saved her, but she didn't see himâ€¦ Kaito-kun, until Stan-kun started yelling at him." She had paused before saying Kaito's name, as if forgetting it for a second.

"See! Kaito-kun would never do that!" Hamtaro defended. "This proves nothing! I know what I saw," Stan argued. "Yeah, and we know that sometimes you can stretch the truth," Boss said. Stan twitched. "I mean it!"

"Guys! No fighting. It's dark and that owl might come backâ€¦ Let's go home, I'm sure the others did," Oxnard suggested, shivering. "He's right. I'm tired. Let's discuss this tomorrow, or something," Boss yawned. All the Hams except Stan and Kaito nodded.

They began departing. "See ya!" Boss said, walking off. "Bye, guys," Oxnard called, waving. "Come back to the clubhouse tomorrow, okay?" Hamtaro asked Kaito. "Uhâ€¦ sure," he replied hesitantly. Hamtaro smiled and ran after Oxnard.

"I never thanked you for saving me," Pashmina said to Panda as he began to leave, too. "Oh, wellâ€¦. It was nothing, really," Panda, smiling sheepishly. Kaito wondered if she'd start yelling again. "That scarf was very important to meâ€¦ but I can live without it," she said. "I'm sorryâ€¦" Panda apologized quietly.

Pashmina didn't seem to hear him as she called Penelope over and bid her goodbyes. Within a few seconds, only Stan and Kaito were left. "I know what I saw, and I'm gonna prove it. So don't get comfortable," Stan growled, glaring at Kaito, before turning and leaving.

Kaito took little heed to his threat. These hamsters had almost been eaten by an owl. They were either really inexperienced, or weren't knights at all.

But right now Kaito had to find a place to sleep. Not in the forest. Knowing there was an owl hunting at that very moment wouldn't allow him to sleep. He sneezed.

Maybe he should go back to man territory, he thought while rubbing his nose. But where would he go from there?

* * *

>Mmm... long chapter, long wait. I've been too busy lately to type up any new chapters or upload them. I've gotta catch up... -Yawns- But not... now... <div>

****Chapter 10: Ham-napped by Man****

It didn't take long for Kaito to reach the city again; it was closer than he thought. But now what? He sneezed and rubbed his nose. It was becoming hard to breath without opening his mouth.

Not as many man were out now. They must've been diurnal. Kaito's kingdom was neither nocturnal nor diurnal. The kingdom was watched over at all times. Most stayed up in the morning, but a selected few knights stayed up only during the night to keep watch of predators.

Kaito was getting a strange feeling. This world of so many unfamiliar things was disturbing. Was he feeling homesick? How stupid. There really was nothing there for him, except his friend Meeko. Either way, he would return after two months.

A squeaky yip snapped him from his thoughts. He spun around. There was a dog, only a little smaller than the other dog he saw before, right behind him. Unlike the other dog, this one looked very excited and ready to run. Its sharp teeth shone as it panted, curled tail wagging and small black eyes were focused on only him.

Kaito dropped the owl feather he had been holding. The dog muscles were tense, as if expecting Kaito to run. It was right. Kaito spun around and ran off as fast as he could. The dog was quick to follow.

Running straight wouldn't help; it was catching up to him fast. Maybe he could trick it. An alleyway was coming up. Kaito quickly turned down it, only to see that it was a dead end.

The dog stopped when Kaito did and stared at him. Kaito hissed. The dog then bent over and raised a paw to the air. It waved it over Kaito a little, getting closer every time, until it touching him.

When he felt the dog's paw touch him, he impulsively bit it. The dog yelped and swung its paw around. Kaito didn't have a good grip and was thrown off, right into a wall. He fell to the ground and shakily got to his paws.

The dog bared its fang and lunged for Kaito, but a yell stopped it. "Samba!" The dog froze as a man appeared. The dog turned, yapping, and jumped up to the man. "Jeez, you're such a bad puppy," the man sighed, kneeling down. Kaito twitched when it looked at him.

"What's that? A rat?" It asked. Kaito hissed when it went to get a closer look. He was struggling to even stand, though. Not only did his back ache from being thrown into the wall, but he was also feeling oddly dizzy and out of breath. He sneezed again.

He suddenly felt something touch his back, making him jump forward, but he didn't notice the man's paw also in front of him. As soon as he accidentally jumped on it, it lifted him into the air. Kaito made an attempt to jump off, but stopped himself as soon as he saw how high in the air he was.

The man took its other paw and stuck out a finger close to Kaito. He

growled, fur bristling. "Guess you're not human friendly," the man muttered, but Kaito didn't understand a word of it. It brought its finger closer until it was nearly touching him.

Like with the dog, he bit it. He was preparing to be thrown off again, but the finger didn't move. Confused, he bit tighter, causing blood to begin to drip. The man winced for a moment, but then just watched.

There was a long moment of silence before Kaito finally let go. How strange. He had never attacked an enemy and have them not fight back. But he still glared at the man with distrust.

Suddenly, his vision began to get blurry. He stumbled a bit. "Looks like you're not in a very good condition," he heard the man say. "C'mon, Samba." The dog yipped and Kaito could feel that the man was walking off with him. On the sidewalk still lay the owl's feather.

Kaito must have fainted, because he didn't remember anything after biting that man. He slowly opened his eyes slightly, then quickly widened them. Where was he? He sat up, but it took a bit of effort.

The ground was flat, white and gray, and seemed to somehow overlap itself here and there. The walls were all brown. It looked like he was in some sort of topless box. There was a small bowl of water and another with food in it. He dared not go near any of them. What if they were poisonous?

Kaito tried to crawl out of the box, but it was of no use. The walls were too flat and he was too out of energy. He sneezed. Suddenly, the box moved a little, causing him to fall over.

He looked up and hissed, seeing the man from last night looking at him. It sighed. "Figures. No gratitude. You probably would've died last night if I hadn't brought you indoors." As if unknowingly backing it up, Kaito sneezed.

As he was rubbing his nose, Kaito felt something grip the scruff of his neck and lifted him into the air. He waved his arms and legs around until the man laid him down on its paw. He began hissing again.

"Hmmâ€¦ you don't really look like Haruna's ratâ€¦ hamster," the man said. Now that it was brighter, Kaito could see more features of the man. It had a batch of spiky red fur on its head and green eyes.

Kaito sneezed again. "I don't think hamsters heal on their own when they get sick," the man said. It stuck its finger toward Kaito. He hissed again and it took its finger away. There was a silence and it looked like the man was thinking, but Kaito couldn't tell.

Suddenly, the man took him across the room they were in and placed him in a bag. It had a strong scent of nothing he recognized, though he was slowly getting used to man's scent. The bag had a few other things in it, but he had no idea what they were. It was too dark to see much.

Kaito felt the bag being lifted from the ground and moved. He was being taken somewhere. But where?

* * *

>Hmâ€| not much to say about this one. Unfortunately, the next chapter is where I have to make up a last name for an original character. If anyone knows Roberto's last name, please tell me. Kylie and June's last names could be useful, too(if not I'll just use their Japanese names as their last names). Anyway, stick around for Chapter 11: Roberto(such a creative title)! <div>

11. Chapter 11: Roberto

Chapter 11: Roberto

After saying goodbye to his mother and leaving his house, the "man", or more specific, Roberto, walked down the side walk. Getting there would be easy; the only problem was talking to her without starting an argument. It'd be hard.

It was like Roberto and Laura were two negatives, or two positives, they just naturally repelled. But she had a hamster, he knew, and if he was going to be able to cure the hamster he found yesterday without emptying his wallet, he'd need her advice.

When he reached her house he heard a call. "Bye!" A girl walked out of a driveway and turned away from Roberto, not seeing him. "H-Haruna," Roberto quickly called. The girl stopped and turned around, looking surprised. "Jiei-kun, what do you want?"

Just that one sentence lost one of Roberto's nerves. As if he always wanted something whenever he talked to Laura. Did she really have to make it sound like he was being a nuisance?

"Hey, you have a rat, right?" Roberto asked after walking closer, not exactly knowing how he should start the conversation. "Huh?" Laura blinked, before realizing what he meant. "I already told you, Hamtaro is not a rat!" she yelled.

"Well, who cares? You know how to take care of it, right?" Roberto asked, trying his best to change the direction the conversation was going. "Of course I do! And he's not an 'it'," Laura replied defiantly. "Okayâ€| That means you know what to do when it gets sick, right?"

"He's not anâ€| Wait, why do you suddenly want to know about Hamtaro?" Laura asked suspiciously. Roberto really didn't want to bother telling her the whole story, but she probably wouldn't give him any advice if he didn't.

He opened a bag that was hanging over one of his shoulders and reached in. He could feel the hamster trying to escape his clutches, but he eventually managed to catch the squirmy creature. He lifted it out of the bag and showed it to Laura.

Laura's first impulse was to smile. "How cute!" She squeaked, lifting a finger to pet it. Roberto took his hand closer to him before the hamster could do anything. Laura looked slightly offended. "It

bites," Roberto explained simply. There was a small bandage on his finger where the hamster had bitten him yesterday.

"I found it last night. I think it's sick," he said. "Then take it to a vet," Laura suggested simply. Did she think he was stupid? "You think I haven't thought of that? That was the first thing I thought of, but I don't have enough money." He was losing his patience.

"Get your parents to pay for it," Laura replied, frowning. "My mother won't even pay for Samba. And I didn't tell her I found this hamster, anyway," Roberto said. The hamster was becoming restless from all the yelling on his hand.

"Well, Hamtaro's healthy. He's never gotten sick before, so I can't help," Laura said. She made it sound like she just didn't want to help, not that she couldn't. "Jeez, I should've known this'd be a waste of time," Roberto grumbled. With that, he turned around and stomped off.

"Man, he can be such a jerk sometimes, right, Hamtaro?" Laura asked, looking down at the bag she was holding. The orange and white hamster had its head sticking out, looking after Roberto. He looked up at her and cocked his head. "Heke?"

Now what? Roberto asked himself as he walked aimlessly around town. He could just let the hamster go and forget he ever saw it, but he knew he'd feel guilty about it. Still, he knew pretty much nothing about any kind of rodent.

He looked in his bag. Surprisingly, the hamster seemed to have settled down and was now curled in a corner. He wasn't sure if that was a good sign or a bad sign.

Roberto finally decided to wait and see if the Cold got better on its own that night. He figured it might since the nasty rodent still had enough energy to snap at him when he took it out of the bag and placed it into the box. It wouldn't eat or drink, though, he noticed. Maybe it just needed to get used to its new surroundings.

When he checked up on it next morning he thought it had died at first. It was curled in the corner and didn't move until he touched it, and even then it was still hardly moving.

Its eyes were watery and its nose was full of mucus. Roberto sighed. Guess he had no choice. The Cold was obviously not going to get better on its own. Good thing it was Sunday, or else he'd have to either skip school or risk the hamster dying while he was gone.

Roberto scooped the weak hamster up and placed it in a smaller box, then left with it. On the way he passed the soccer field. A few boys were kicking the checkered ball around. The urge to join them was almost unbearable, but he quickly resisted and continued on.

Roberto loved soccer; it was his favorite hobby, next to playing the flute, which he wasn't crazy about telling everyone about. There were a lot of things he hid from most people. He didn't particularly know why he did so himself. A lot of people misjudge him because of that. You'd have to get pretty close to him in order to see his real self, which no one in this town has done yet.

Roberto moved to this town only a few months ago. But those months seemed like forever ago, and he was no longer called the "new kid". Though he was kind of a loner, which was naturally pretty lonely; but over the months he started getting used to it. Even though, he couldn't help but wish they had never moved.

It wasn't long before Roberto reached the vet. So early on a Sunday they weren't too busy and took him pretty quickly. The doctor told him that if he had waited another day the hamster almost positively would've died. He said that symptoms of a Cold in hamsters usually aren't noticed until it's too late.

It didn't take long for the doctor to finish up with the hamster and it was ready to leave. Roberto took this chance to ask a few questions.

"It's a male. A Longhaired Syrian, I think. Although his colors are much similar to the colors of a Common Hamster, but those hamsters are very big. Hamsters are nocturnal. They can eat anything from seeds to fruits to cheese and to even cooked chicken and fish, but I suggest just sticking with store brand food, vegetables, and fruits. You'll have to get him a cage and bedding. Make sure he has food and water at all times. Oh, yes, and be sure to get him a whiz wheel."

"A what?"

"A small wheel that they exercise on at night so that they don't get fat and lazyâ€¦ Are you really going to keep an animal you know nothing about?" The doctor asked. "Either that or I let it go, right?" Roberto replied. Aside he added, "that's just saying my mother even lets me keep it."

"I wouldn't suggest that. Considering it was wondering the city, I'd say it either escaped from a pet store or an owner. You could just give it back to a pet store, but I think it'd do better in personal hands; especially since it's a longhaired hamster."

"Why's that?"

"Longhaired hamsters need grooming everyday. They can get sick from just that, they are very sensitive creatures, you see," the doctor explained. Roberto looked down at the small box the hamster was in. "You sure you can take the responsibility?" the doctor asked.

"Yeah, I have a puppy. Nothing's harder to take care of than that," Roberto replied. "That's true," the doctor smiled. "Well, then, I'd like to see this little one again in a few days, sayâ€¦ Wednesday? Though I'm sure he'll be fine."

"All rightâ€¦ Oh, and, Lion-sensei, do you think maybe I could pay for this in separate payments every week, or so?" Roberto smiled sheepishly, holding his two hands together. The doctor smiled. "I'm sure that'll be fine."

"Thank you very much. Bye," Roberto replied, sounding a bit relieved. "See you again on Wednesday." When Roberto had left the room, Doctor Lion turned and went through another door, which led to his office. In it was a small cage. "Well, Nurse-chan, it looks like there's a

new hamster in town," he smiled to the light brown and white hamster inside. "Heke?" It squeaked.

* * *

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Hahahaâ€| haâ€| ahâ€| I knowâ€| Jieiâ€| It means "independent" so I thought it kinda suited himâ€| since apparently no one knows his real last name. And, as you can see, I've added quite a few traits to him. It's just to make him a more interesting character(and because I hardly remember him from the anime). His parents also haveâ€| different names(that's saying that their names were even mentioned in the anime). But, as you can see, only his mother was mentioned here so far. All I remember about Roberto was that he and Laura always argued and he was a bit competitive with Travis. Oh wellâ€| Anyway, keep in touch for Chapter 12: A Flute and a Cage. Review, please!

12. Chapter 12: A Flute and a Cage

****Chapter 12: A Flute and a Cage****

What's that sound...?

It was all a blur. He must've been sleeping for a long time because it took a while to regain his senses. He slowly sat up, not opening his eyes, just listening.

_I've never heard anything like it... I like it... _

It was a calm, peaceful, carefree sound. Kaito couldn't help but nodded his head to the beat a bit. It was a moment until it suddenly stopped.

"You like it, huh?"

Kaito quickly opened his eyes. Not far in front of him was that red-headed man. He was leaning against the wall, sitting on a large rectangular object. There was a window on one side and another wall farther on the other side. Moonlight shone threw the window. Last Kaito remembered it was morning.

Kaito backed up, before tripping over something behind him. He fell right into a circle shaped bowl. Small objects were in them, but he was much too alarmed to see what they were.

Immediately, he scrambled out and ran off, before running right into a slightly slanted wall. The wall was just about three quarters his height until it turned into thin golden bars. They reminded him of the prison chambers at his kingdom.

Kaito backed away again until he bumped into something else. It was a very small house-like object, but still bigger than him. A thin board at the front led halfway up it, to a small hole in the middle of the house.

Kaito jumped away from it and suddenly found himself on top of a bared wheel. It swung slightly as he stood on it and he quickly hoped

off.

"Looks like you're not used to cages," Roberto muttered as he watched the frantic hamster scurry about the cage. He looked down at an Indian Flute he was holding. After short moment he held it sideways and pressed an end to his lips(it's a transverse flute).

The sound was suddenly back. Kaito stopped dead in his tracks to listen. He closed his eyes again and tilted his head a bit to one side, then the other. The sound mesmerized him. He had never felt so calm before.

"Guess you like flutes," Roberto said as the sound suddenly stopped. Kaito was slowly putting it together. Was the man making the noise? How could such a creature made such a beautiful sound?

"I can't play it all night, though." Roberto put the flute on a table next to his bed; the same table Kaito's cage was on. Kaito watched as he lay down and pulled the sheets over himself. "Just don't be noisy tonight," he muttered, before it became silent.

Kaito didn't move until a few minutes had past. The man wasn't moving anymore, all he could hear was his soft breathing.

Assuming he had fallen asleep, Kaito turned around to examine his new surroundings. Right now all he cared about was this cage. The bowl was in the far left corner, while a white-ish object hung outside of the cage on the other side. The small house was in the middle of the cage to the right. The large wheel was all the way on the other side, where Kaito was now, and it took up a lot of the room on that side of the cage.

Kaito made his way to the bowl. Looking inside it, he saw a bunch of black and white seeds: sunflower seeds. He knew not what they were, though, nor what they tasted like. They looked a bit familiar, though. Food like this was usually limited to the higher social class in Blackfire kingdom only.

Kaito took one out. Natural instinct told him how to open it. He sniffed it once, before taking a small bite, then another, and then it was gone. It tasted delicious. No wonder the higher classes kept it all for themselves. Kaito had also forgotten how hungry he was.

He would've eaten more, but he was too interested in everything else. He padded to the right side of the cage, where the white-ish object hung. A metallic tube came out of the bottom and reached through the bars, into the cage. It was just about Kaito's height. A metal ball was inside the tube.

Kaito nudged the ball with his nose. It easily pushed back. But, as it did, a drop of water hit his nose. He did it again after a moment. Then, instead of using his nose, he pushed the ball with his tongue. It was pretty easy to drink the water coming out of it after he got used to it.

After that he looked at the small house. Inside was nothing. Upon crawling in he realized it was a bit cramped, which was how hamsters liked it. But it was still unusual to him.

Only after he crawled out did he finally notice the ground. It was covered in soft wood shavings. It felt nice of his paws and was easy to dig into. But still it all felt so unusual.

Kaito then began absent-mindedly digging up all of the wood shavings into a pile on the opposite side of the wheel. After it was all one big pile, he made a hole near the top, where he could crawl in.

By the time he was done, the sun was beginning to rise. He had been sleeping for nearly two days straight and certainly wasn't tired now. He padded over to the wheel. It had scared him when he first went on it and had been avoiding it ever since.

Carefully, he crawled on top of it. Immediately it swung a bit. It took a while for Kaito to regain his balance. He put his paws to on side and began walking forward. The wheel under him went in the opposite direction. After a minute he began walking faster, then running.

It was actually pretty fun. So much that Kaito didn't notice the irritating squeak it was making continuously. But he did hear a mutter next to him.

"Annoyingâ€|" Roberto was sitting up, rubbing his tired head. He looked drowsily at a clock next to his bed. "Close enough," he mumbled, putting his hand on it.

Kaito had stopped running and was now watching the man as he got up. It took a minute for Roberto to see the pile of wood shavings the hamster had made. Some of the shavings had fallen through the bars and were now scattered on the table.

"Someone was busy last night."

Kaito watched all of the strange things the man did as he walked in and out of the room a few times. After a while he left and didn't come back in. He could hear noise a distance outside of the room. Gibberish called "man language". It sounded like more than one.

And then it was silent. Not a sound to be heard. It was so quiet that Kaito forgot to breathe for a moment. _Guess I ought to find a way out of here,_ he thought. He scanned the sides of the cage and scrutinized the bars. He put his paws to them and shook. They were pretty stiff. But there had to be someway out.

Kaito shook all the bars halfway around the cage until he was next to the small house. A squeak made him stop. He turned around. He looked at the door to the room, which was opened slightly. He didn't remember how far open it was before. He was too far away to see the floor under the doorway. He simply shrugged it off and continued.

Soon he was checking the right side of the cage, by the wheel, for any loose bars or exits. He didn't notice the huge, wet, black thing until he was right in front of it. He froze, shocked to see the dog that was chasing him a few days ago only inches away.

* * *

>Wow, you wouldn't believe how much research I did just on flutes.

What they're called, which ones sound nice, how they're usedâ€¦ I know nothing about flutes(I did a lot of research about junk for the next chapter, too). Oh well, at least I know a lot about hamsters; enough to be able to describe them in detail. So, review, and stay tuned for Chapter 13: Making a Mess! <div>

13. Chapter 13: Making a Mess

****Chapter 13: Making a Mess****

The two stared at each other for what seemed like an eternity. The brown and white Shiba Inu was sitting on Roberto's bed, nose nearly touching Kaito's cage. Kaito began backing up.

The dog then looked at its paw, as if remembering something. Kaito realized in horror that it was the same paw he had bitten. Apparently the dog realized this, too, as it suddenly glared at him and began growling.

Kaito quickly looked behind him at the pile of wood shavings he had made the night before. It wasn't likely to be any protection, but he made a dash for it anyway. The dog snarled just as he leapt inside, but then he was quickly thrown out as gravity seemed to flip over.

There was a loud crash and a yelp of surprise. Kaito groaned as he slowly returned to his paws and suddenly realized that the cage was on its side. The dog had pounced at the cage and knocked it to the floor. It had surprised itself and yelped. Kaito then realized that the top, which was now a side, had no bars. It had fallen off from the pressure.

Kaito couldn't do much before the dog blocked his way from getting out. It lowered its head, baring its pointy white teeth. Kaito looked past it, at the door. If he was fast enough, he might be able to run under the dog and out.

He did so just as the dog leapt at him. It crashed into the cage as Kaito ran under it and slipped through the door. The dog had a little trouble slipping through the door, and, by the time it did, Kaito was halfway down the hall.

He stopped when he reached a wall and looked to his left to see a flight of stairs. It seemed so far down, how could he possibly get down, let alone get down and avoid the dog?

The dog gave him the answer. It slammed into him by accident, knocking him over and down the stairs. He must've hit each one before finally reaching the ground. By then he was bemused and throbbing with pain.

The dog snapped him back to reality as he heard it stomping down the steps. He made a blind dash to the right, right into another room. This room had a white theme to it, it seemed, and the floors were slippery, unfortunately. They were slippery for the dog, too.

Kaito ran under a pair of high stools next to a round table that seemed to be attached to the floor. The dog was too big to fit under them, but it didn't seem to care as it slammed right into them. They

both fell over, just missing Kaito as he turning with the table.

The dog was quick to follow him. Kaito ran all around the table until he reached the now fallen stools again. He suddenly realized that they had fallen on each other, and made a sort of slope to the top of the table.

Kaito immediately crawled up them with ease and hopped onto the table. The dog had more trouble and soon gave up on trying to get up the same way. Kaito took this time to catch his breath. Though it didn't take long until he heard the dog's snarling behind him.

Somehow, it had managed to partly jump on the table. It couldn't get on from there, so it let itself fall. Then it tried again. The second jump was more successful, and, with a bit of effort, it hauled itself onto the table.

It wasted no time to run for Kaito. It was knocking over many strange objects on the way. They made ear-ringing shattering noises as they hit the floor. Kaito decided to try running under the dog's legs again. Doing so made the dog nearly fall over the edge of the table as it tried to turn around.

Kaito stopped at the other edge, knowing that if he jumped, he could severely hurt himself. But he had no choice as the dog's wet nose slammed into him, throwing him out of the kitchen and into the room where the stairs were.

The dog gave Kaito time to regain himself as it slowly tried to find a way off the table. It eventually decided to jump off, sliding slightly as it followed Kaito. The floor in this room wasn't as slippery, but still shiny and flat. It looked like wood, but felt nothing like it.

Kaito spent no time examining it. He dashed under a nearby coffee table. Again, the dog was almost too big to fit under it. It knocked over everything on it and almost the table itself as it did so. Kaito then ran out and under a couch.

The dog wasn't able to follow, to Kaito's relief. It could only fit its muzzle under the crouch. Kaito sighed as the dog continuously tried to push and dig its way under the couch. Finally, it gave up, at least, that what it seemed as it disappeared from outside of the couch.

The place was so strange, Kaito finally though. Such weird objects and rooms. He couldn't imagine what man used half of them for. Did they really live here? Kaito was snapped out of his thought when he heard a snarl.

He turned around to see the dog's head and one leg under the couch. Somehow it had found a place where it could fit better under the couch. It couldn't get under any more than that, but Kaito didn't know that.

It suddenly began barking repetitively. Kaito quickly dashed out from under the couch. Seeing this, the dog forced itself back and ran around to couch to where Kaito was.

Kaito blindly ran around the room until he reached a small, stool-like table. There was a curled white wire hanging off of it that he didn't notice. He ran right into it and was surprised when he was forced back.

The wire had twisted all around his body. He desperately struggled to free himself, but it was no use. The dog had reached him by now. And, as if savoring the moment of having finally caught its prey, it simply stared and growled at Kaito for a few second. Its face was close to Kaito, and he took this chance.

He swiped his small claws across the dog's black nose, causing it to jerk upward and yelp. With more desperate twists and tugs, Kaito finally released himself from the cord. The dog pounced at him in fury, slamming into the small table. A white thing the wire was attached to fell from it.

Kaito tried to hide under a tall cabinet, but found that it was too close to the floor. He managed to dodge away just as the dog was snapping for him, causing it to bump into the cabinet. Kaito noticed it begin to rock back and forth dangerously. He stopped, as did the dog when it noticed the same.

Instead of using their common sense and simply moving out of the way of the cabinet, they backed up. A few things on the huge object fell off, but eventually it came to a rest without falling itself.

Kaito sighed with relief, before it suddenly became a grunt as something pushed his body to the ground. It was the dog, of course. It had one paw on his back, gray claws pressing heavily on his fur.

Kaito struggled to break free, but it was no use. He flinched as the dog opened its huge mouth and lunged for him. There was a pause.

Why hadn't he felt an unbearable surge of pain yet? He slowly opened his eyes to see the dog's mouth, wide open, towered over him. Just the sight made him feel a bit faint.

The dog then closed its mouth, looking surprised. It sniffed Kaito, pressing its nose into his fur. For a moment Kaito wondered if he should scratch it again, but thought against it. The dog's tension seemed to have vanished.

Then, to Kaito's utter confusion and displeasure, the dog swiped a big wet tongue over his back. He blinked, dumbfounded, as the dog took its paw off of him. He stood up and looked at it. Its mouth was wide open with its tongue lolling out. Its curled tail was wagging furiously.

Kaito didn't know what to think of this. Could these creatures get any stranger? He flattened the fur on his back, which was sticking up from the dog's saliva. He had a feeling he'd never know why this dog had at one second decided to eat him, and then decided to lick him. Still, he took no chances.

Kaito climbed on top of the small table the white object had been on. What if the unpredictable creature decided it wanted to eat him again? It didn't seem it did as he was up there. It was quietly playing with the white object that had fallen off of the table he was

on. It made a strange ring every now and then, which the dog seemed to find interesting.

Kaito sighed, feeling trapped. For once, he actually wished the man would come back.

* * *

>Lookit! I finally made a profile here. The thought had never accured to me. Anyway, Samba's strange behavior will be explained... eventually... if I remember... yeah... So, stay tuned for Chapter 14: Animal Trouble. <p>(Psst! Review and read my profile)<p>

14. Chapter 14: Animal Trouble

****Chapter 14: Animal Trouble****

"¹Tadaim-- aah!! What the hell happened?!"

Roberto was greeted with an unwelcoming home that looked like a tornado had hit for the inside. He dropped his bag, clenching his fist. "Samba!"

The Shiba Inu puppy had been quickly padding over to greet his owner, but immediately crouched down at the yell. Sheepishly, he crawled closer, belly nearly brushing the floor. Roberto knelt down when Samba had reached him.

Samba began wagging his tail slightly in a hopeful attempt to escape punishment. But Roberto would never strike any animal. He simply tapped Samba's nose lightly. "What's gotten into you? You've never torn apart the house before," he sighed. Samba cocked his head with a short whine.

Roberto got up and went straight for the stairs, Samba close behind. "Jeez, I've gotta quickly clean this up beforeâ€¦ Where's the hamster?!" He had stopped mid-sentence when he reached his room and saw the empty cage of the floor. He spun around and stared at Samba suspiciously.

The puppy twitched and made a helpless attempt to run off, but Roberto was faster. He pounced on the dog and held his mouth opened. "You didn't eat him, did you?" He asked. A quiet squeak made him look down the stairs.

"Oh, there he is-- Hey!" Roberto spotted the longhaired critter by the slightly opened front door. He was cleverly trying to open it further with his nose. Samba made a slight yelp when he was dropped as Roberto dashed down the stairs.

He wasn't fast enough, though. The hamster had made his escape the second the door was opened enough. Roberto swung the door opened, ran out, then slammed it closed, leaving lonely Samba unable to follow.

The hamster led Roberto to the sidewalk. He saw him curiously sniffing around. He tried sneaking up on him, but he soon found that he was underestimating the rodent. As soon had he tried to grab him, he would always dodge away the last second.

Roberto kept hopelessly trying to sneak up on the hamster until it led him to a house. The hamster padded across the yard and under a fence that must've led to the back. Roberto hesitated.

Was this hamster worth trespassing? "Me and my conscience," Roberto sighed to himself, before hopping the fence. He saw the hamster sniffing around the grass. Not much was in this yard, not that Roberto was really looking.

He lowered himself and crawled closer to the hamster. The rodent seemed interested in something as he kept sniffing around. Quickly, he lunged for him, yelling "gotcha" as he clapped his hands over the area the hamster was. He found a second later that he had again escaped him last second.

The hamster was now running toward the house. He bounced up a few short stairs and onto the wooden floor. The house had a bit of an old style to it. The back door was a slide door, and was opened. It actually seemed like someone's room. It also had a cage in it.

Roberto made a silent gasp. His hamster was sniffing the cage. He noticed another hamster in it. It was gray and white hamster. For a moment he actually thought he saw the gray hamster lifting the door to its cage to let his hamster in. Whether it did or not, his hamster certainly was in the cage now.

The longhaired rodent dashed into a small house in the cage when Roberto got up and walked closer. The gray hamster hesitantly followed. "Think you can hide from me in a cage?" Roberto chuckled slightly. He stuck his arm into the cage and felt for a hamster in the small house.

"Ow!" He yelped quickly when one of them bit him, most likely his hamster, but he didn't return his hand. "Not this time!" He almost had one until a tiny gasp caught his attention. Looking up, he saw a young girl, not too far from him in the room, staring at him. She suddenly screamed.

The scream was so loud that crows actually fluttered out of a tree nearby and Roberto wanted to cover his ears. "Pervert!!" She screamed, grabbing a nearby broom and swinging it in the air. "Wait, I'm not-- Ow!" Roberto was interrupted as the broom struck his head.

He felt backward in surprise, accidentally knocking the cage over with his hand. He could feel that one of the hamsters had been caught in his grip. "Ah-ha!" He cheered, grinning successfully. But he quickly frowned when he saw that it had been the gray hamster he caught.

"Ah!" The girl squeaked. "Give me back my Panda!! You're a perverted hamster-thief!" She screamed, lifting the broom again. "Ah! I'm not-- ow-- a hamster-- ow-- thief-- ow--!" Roberto yelled, finding himself unable to dodge the girl's blows.

"Give me back my Panda!" She demanded. "Here!" Roberto quickly said, throwing his hand closer to her. Surprised, she retrieved her hamster. "Oh, thank you!" There was a pause as Roberto rubbed his

head. "Now go away!!" The girl suddenly screamed again, hitting him.

"Ow! But wait, I need my hamster, too." Roberto had finally managed to grab the broom from the girl before it hit him again. "Huh?" The girl asked. "There," Roberto said, pointing to the now turned over cage. The brown hamster was there, watching the whole thing. Unfortunately for him, the top of the cage didn't pop off this time.

"I don't have two hamstersâ€¦" the girl said, turning to face the cage. "That 'cause its mine," Roberto sighed. "So thenâ€¦ you're a perverted hamster-thief hamster owner?"

"Yes-- No!" Roberto had let his relief make him careless for a second. "I'm not a pervertâ€¦ and I'm not a thiefâ€¦ My hamster just ran away and happened toâ€¦ somehow make it into your hamster's cage." He knew the story sounded bogus. How could a hamster get in a cage?

"That makes sense. Panda makes friends easily!" The girl smiled, causing Roberto to drop his head. She placed the panda-like hamster on her shoulder before kneeling down and opening the cage. "I wonder if he's a Ham-Ham."

"Hey, wait, be careful. He bi--"

"Ow!"

Roberto's warning came in too late. The longhaired hamster immediately bit the girl as soon as he hopped out of the cage. Suddenly, he heard the most strangest squeak ever. In a flash, the girl's gray hamster had leapt down her arm and was hissing at the brown hamster only millimeters away from his face.

Surprised, the brown hamster immediately let go and backed up. Roberto took this chance and pounced at the rodent before he could escape. "Not this time." He smiled as the hamster struggled to escape his grip.

"You should get it a cage," the girl suddenly said. She didn't seem to mind that fact that her finger was bleeding slightly. "He was in a cageâ€¦" Roberto replied, looking away irritably. "Then you should get it a better cage. A hamster won't run away if it's happier."

Roberto looked at the girl. "You think you know so much about hamsters?" he asked. The girl smiled. "Mm!"

It all took a strange turn from there. Roberto came from a pervert, to a perverted hamster-thief, to a perverted hamster-thief hamster owner, to the girl's new friend. He learned that her name was Mimi and that she was alone today(which explains why no one came whilst she was screaming). She was a young girl with short brown hair. She was naÃŒve and mature at the same time, it seemed.

"I think hamsters like to look outside. Panda always likes looking at other animals, especially when the Ham-Hams come around."

" 'Ham-Hams' ? "

"Yeah! They're a group of hamsters. They're my friends. We have lots of fun together! I bet your hamster is friends with them, too," Mimi explained, turning around to look at the now fixed cage.

"I doubt itâ€¦ He's not exactly socialâ€¦" Roberto replied, even though he had a feeling these "Ham-Hams" came out of a dream the girl once had. Though he was surprised enough to see the two hamster in the cage in harmony. "What's his name, anyway?" Mimi asked.

"Name?"

"Of course! You have to name your hamster!" Mimi almost seemed angry. "Ohâ€¦ okayâ€¦" Roberto replied, surprised, leaning back slightly from his seated position. "If you can't think of a name, just name him after something he looks like, or something, like Panda," Mimi suggested. She was right. Panda obviously got his name from his looks. "Looks, huhâ€¦?" His longhaired hamster didn't exactly look like anything in particular, except a hamster, of course.

"Or maybe something he likes."

"Likesâ€¦"

What could that biting rodent possibly like? Exceptâ€¦ "He likes flutesâ€¦" Roberto said absent-mindedly. "You play a flute?" Mimi asked. "Y-- noâ€¦" he lied quietly. There was a short silence as the two watched the hamster interact. Panda seemed more interested in Roberto's longhaired hamster than the longhaired hamster did in Panda. A voice interrupted the silence.

"Mimi, I'm home!"

"Oh! That's my mom. You should probably go. She won't like it that I'm talking to a stranger," Mimi said quickly, standing up. "Well, I'm not a stranger anymore," Roberto smiled. "Yeah!" Mimi smiled back.

She opened the cage and the two hamsters hopped on her hand. It looked as if Panda actually pulled the longhaired hamster on. Roberto picked him up by the scruff, tired of getting bitten. "You're more trouble than you're worthâ€¦" he muttered.

"Thanks for keeping me company. Come again soon, okay?" Mimi waved as Roberto began to leave. "Yeah," Roberto smiled pleasantly, and then hopped the fence again.

It was quite late by the time Roberto got home. He was worn out and could think of nothing but eating, taking a shower, and then going to bed. He had no time for any of those, though, he suddenly realized as he entered his house.

"Roberto!" Someone snapped quickly as soon as the front door was opened. Roberto felt his hamster jump slightly. He put a finger to his teeth in realization. _Shoot, I forgot to clean after Samba!_

"How the heck do you expect to keep a dog if you can't even clean

after it?! And how the heck do you expect to keep _two_ animals if you can only pay attention to one at a time?! How the heck do you expect I feel coming home to _this_?!!" The yelling lady said the last sentence quicker and much louder.

"I-I'm sorry, 'kaasan, but the hamster got away and--"

"The hamster got away, huh?! Well maybe I should make sure it doesn't come back next time." The mother narrowed her eyes on the hamster.

She was a tall woman with long light brown hair slightly curled at the end and now burning green eyes. She was, now known, Roberto's mother, Jiei Sakura(though Roberto thought she was far from a "cherry blossom").

"Your father would have a fit if he were here," his mother began, calming down slightly. _Don't remind me,_ Roberto thought bitterly. "Anyway, weren't you supposed to go to a job you applied for yesterday?" His mother asked.

"Shi--!"

"I'll have none of _that_ talk in my house!" His mother had swatted his hand quickly before he could continue. She sighed. "You're a hopeless boy, Roberto! Your father wouldn't stand for this." Roberto frowned. Why did she have to keep mentioning his father? She suddenly turned on him, catching him by surprise.

"Now I want you to spend all tonight and tomorrow cleaning up," she demanded. "But, 'kaasan, I have soccer practice tomorrow _and_ I have to make up for missing that interview," Roberto complained. "Well you'll have to miss those too! Unless you can get all of this done by tonight," his mother replied, obviously not believing he could.

So, like a mad man, Roberto went to work.

* * *

>^1Tadaima means "I'm home". It what everyone says when they return home(in Japan, of course). I probably won't use it again; I just thought "Tadaim-- ahh" sounded funny. :D <p>^2In Japan, last names are said before the first(but I'm not sure if it's just in speaking).<p>

So, stick around for Chapter 15: A Dream and Coincidences!

15. Chapter 15: A Dream and Coincidences

**Chapter 15: A Dream and Coincidences **

_ "I'm sure you're all wondering why you've been brought here," a blonde hamster with a black belly began. "Well, questions like those will not be asked around me. You are all male hamsters. Therefore, you shall all train to become knights. It is of Great Guroki's will. You will all grow up to serve the king's every whim. You will learn never to question his orders. If he tells you to kill someone, kiss someone, eat someone! you do it. If the king says 'do it,' it is

done. Understood?" _

_The group of young hamsters in front of him looked uneasily at each other. "No 'mommy, daddy' whining. And never, never cry. Crying is a sign of weakness and hesitationâ€¦|" _

The demanding voice seemed to fade off. One of the hamsters in the group was dark brown with a black belly.

Amber eyes slowly opened inside the small cage. Kaito slowly lifted his head and tilted it to the side to get wood shaving out of his ears. _What a random dream,_ he thought. It was of when he was becoming an apprentice. Did that mean he was homesick?

Kaito looked around as he stood up. It was very quiet. The man was still asleep, as was the dog at the foot of his bed. He looked at the wheel at the end of his cage.

"You'll run ten laps around the castle every morning," a voice echoed in Kaito's mind. He padded over to the wheel and hopped on. Immediately, he began running, faster and faster until he couldn't go any faster. The faster he ran, the louder the wheel's squeaking got.

Kaito was so concentrated on running that when a hand slapped onto the cage suddenly he spun out of control and fell off the wheel. "You're so noisyâ€¦|" Roberto groaned as he slowly lifted himself from the bed. He looked at his clock, then got up and sleepily left the room. The dog never moved.

Kaito did nothing as minutes went by. He just stared at Roberto every time he returned to the room. He'd also cast a quick glance at the sleeping dog every now and then.

Kaito twitched when Roberto walked in the room again with something orange to his mouth. He was gnawing at an end absent-mindedly. He swung a bag that was on his bed over a shoulder and turned to leave. But first, he looked at Kaito, then at the long orange object.

"Here you go, Flute," he said, opening the cage door and pushing the object through. Kaito hissed at first in alarm, then sniffed the object. It smelt like food. _It looks likeâ€¦|_ He paused. Could it be?

Kaito cautiously nipped at the end, then jerked in surprised. It was! _I love carrots!!_ He almost screamed allowed in delight as he greedily began crunching away at the vegetable.

"Well, now I know something to get that you certainly will eat," Roberto chuckled. Kaito hadn't been eating much of the sunflower seeds or any other hamster food he'd been given. It all just didn't taste right.

By the time Kaito had finished the carrot it had been a few minutes since Roberto had left and didn't come back. He couldn't help but wonder where the man went everyday. The puppy, still unmoved, breathed softy.

That's right, I've gotta find a way out of here. Kaito looked up. No way he'd be able to get out the way he did last time again. He

suddenly thought of something. The man had pushed the carrot in by lifting a small area of the bars upward. Kaito padded over to the area in the front.

He shook the bars until he felt a small row of loose ones. Now how to open it. He shook them all around like crazy until it finally went up. He had surprised himself at first and dropped it, then did it again.

Kaito held the latch up with his muzzle and quickly hopped out. On the way the door fell on his back halfway out, making him tumble out. He quickly looked at the puppy as soon as he regained his balance. It still hadn't moved.

Now what? Kaito looked around. The door to the room had been closed. He suddenly felt a breeze as he was thinking. He looked toward Roberto's bed, at the window. It was opened just a crack. Perfect!

Carefully, Kaito padded to the edge of the table the cage was on and hopped to the window sill. He had miscalculated its distance and almost missed, making a loud grunt as he caught the edge and hauled himself up. He quickly looked to his right. No signs of any movement from the dog.

Kaito then went over to the window and shoved his nose under into the opened part. It took a lot of effort, but his body was eventually forced out. But, before he knew it, he was suddenly tumbling down the roof of the house. He didn't stop until he fell into a gutter full of dead leaves.

Kaito poked his head out and looked down. The ground was a long way off. How could he possibly get down? He then noticed something next to the gutter. A wire of strange colored light bulbs going across the gutter and turning down the nearest corner, to the ground.

Kaito followed them to the corner and looked down again. He tugged at the wire lightly. They seemed tight enough, but would he really trust his life to something man made? Well, he was forced to many times before.

Kaito crawled out of the gutter and held tightly onto the wire as he crawled down carefully. Eventually he reached a lump in the wire where it changed color. It turned there, leaving a small space where he could simply jump to the ground.

Once he was on the ground he could hardly contain himself. He was free. Finally free of that dreadful cage, monster dog, and man! Something was tugging at him, though, as he walked away from the house. He kept finding himself looking back. But why?

The dog there had nearly eaten him and it was infested with man. But somehow he had a baffling urge to return and see that red-headed man. Kaito shook his head. How stupid. He had no reason to go back. He didn't owe them anything.

Although, now that he thought of it, it was strange the way he was terribly sick when the man had first captured him and was suddenly better a day later— Bah! Pure coincidence.

* * *

>Those "strange colored lights" are actually Christmas lights Roberto had lazily never taken down. I just realized that I forgot to mention when this is all taking place. It's Fall. I don't feel like mentioning a month 'cause it might confuse me in later chapters.
<p>Oh yeah! I also just noticed that I never thanked everyone for their kind reviews. Well, thank you very much! Reviews encourage and inspire a writer! Although the next chapter might be a bit boring, it had to be made. Explanations are needed. With that said, stick around for Chapter 16: Explanation!<p>

16. Chapter 16: Explanation

**Chapter 16: Explanation **

Kaito heard voices as he was passing a hedge. "Let's go, come on. Time's a wastin'!" Someone yelled impatiently. He immediately recognized the voice, along with the replying voice. "Aw, why do we always have to run to the clubhouse?" it panted.

It was Boss and Oxnard. Someone else was this them, too, Kaito noticed as he looked over. "I wonder if Kaito-kun lives around here." Hamtaro's words made Kaito twitch an ear. "Who knows?" Boss asked absent-mindedly.

The three were running across a yard in front of a house. Oxnard was dragging behind Boss and Hamtaro. Hamtaro stopped a few times to let the overweight hamster catch up. Boss was obviously annoyed by this as he stopped and tapped his paw to the ground. He suddenly looked Kaito's way.

"Hmâ€|? Hey, isn't that him over there?" He asked, pointing. Hamtaro immediately looked over. "Oh! It's Kaito-kun!" He yelled excitedly. Kaito was once again caught off guard as he ran over to him and looked at him closely in the face, smiling.

Actually, if he had been in his kingdom, Kaito would've taken this as a challenge. Looking at a knight in the eyes was an insult among the peasants, and they usually got punished for it. Kaito forced himself to ignore his old laws. They obviously weren't the same here.

"I knew you'd come back! It's been so long," Hamtaro said. "Yeah, where've you been?" Oxnard asked as the two others walked over. "Uhâ€|" Kaito began, looking to the side. "Bah! Explain later. The others are waiting," Boss interrupted turning and walking off without another word. Oxnard followed.

"C'mon, Kaito-kun," Hamtaro invited. Kaito nodded slowly and the two followed Boss and Oxnard.

Kaito had never expected that he'd be missed by the hamsters he hardly knew. In his kingdom, knights weren't known unless they had done some "great" deed. No one except Meeko and a few knights knew Kaito by name. But the Ham-Hams acted as if Kaito had been an old friend that disappeared for a very long time.

"Where were you?" A hamster asked that looked just like Stan, only a girl. "Did you forget about us?" Oxnard asked. "You didn't get lost,

did you?" A tall brown hamster asked. Kaito was speechless. He didn't recognize half of these hamsters! Was it his bad memory at remembering faces or did he just not see them that day?

The large group of hamsters was all seated at the round table in the clubhouse. They had needed to bring in a new chair so that Kaito could sit. All eyes were on him. He had never been the center of attention before. "Umâ€¦ uhâ€¦ Well, you seeâ€¦ After that day with the owl, I was kindaâ€¦ taken away by a man," he stammered.

"A man?" nearly all of the echoed at once. "Yeah, manâ€¦ Those tall, furless things," Kaito replied. "Humans," Boss corrected simply. "Huh?" "There called humansâ€¦ where did you say you were from again?" Boss asked suspiciously.

Kaito avoided the question. "Well, then I was taken by â€¦ 'human'," he said. "Who?" A gray and white hamster with glasses asked. 'Who?' What a way to address a creature like a human. Kaito simply shrugged in confusion.

"What did the human look like?" The tall brown hamster asked. Kaito paused, thinking. "Wellâ€¦ it had red fur on its head andâ€¦ green eyesâ€¦ I don't knowâ€¦ they all look the same, really," he answered. "Tell me about it," Boss agreed.

"Laura has red-ish hair," Hamtaro remarked. "Well, it's obviously not 'er since you were with 'er, right?" A light brown and white hamster wearing an apron asked. "Oh yeah, right," Hamtaro replied, sheepishly scratching an ear.

"Red hairâ€¦ green eyesâ€¦ Who could it be?" Pashmina asked. "Ookwee, ookwee!" Penelope suddenly squeaked, jumping up. "Oh yeah! Roberto has red hair," Pashmina replied.

"Roberto doesn't know squat about hamsters. Why would he take one in?" Boss huffed, as if remembering something about Roberto that made him annoyed. Kaito was still dumbfounded. Humans had names?

"What was the human's house like?" the hamster with glasses asked. "House?" Kaito echoed. "Do you know nothing? The house! The place the human took you in," Boss said impatiently.

Oh, right. The human's nest. "It's kind of hard to explainâ€¦" Kaito answered. "Wellâ€¦ any certain z'ings in it that you could describe?" A white hamster with two blue ribbons asked. She had a French accent. "There wasâ€¦ this big beast in it that tried to eat me," Kaito explained, remembering its pointy fangs.

"Beast?" The Hams echoed all together again. "It was like a wolf and a fox mixedâ€¦" Kaito said. "A dog?" Boss asked as if Kaito were stupid. Kaito didn't reply. How should he know what it was called? "It was all brown with a white muzzle and paws and a curly tailâ€¦ and small black eyesâ€¦ It chased me all around theâ€¦ 'house' yesterday and nearly ate meâ€¦ until it strangely stoppedâ€¦" Kaito paused. The Hams stared at him expectantly.

"Do you think that was Samba?" Hamtaro asked the others. "It certainly fits Samba's description," the white hamster replied. "Then your owner must be Roberto," the hamster with glasses said to Kaito.

Owner?!

"Wait a minute! I'm no human's servant!" Kaito suddenly yelled. He quickly looked down when everyone stared at him in surprise. That had been the first time he'd raised his voice in front of them.

"Not servantâ€|" Hamtaro said, almost sounding hurt for some reason. "Humans are our friends. We help each other." Kaito stared at him incredulously. He didn't seem to notice as he went on. "Everyone here but Boss-kun and Snoozer-kun has an owner. We're all best friends with our owners, right?" He turned to the others and they nodded, smiling.

Kaito didn't understand this at all. Did that mean they could understand the humans, too? Wait a minuteâ€| It was all becoming clear now. This kingdom must've been in allegiance with the humans! No wonder they were so weak. They didn't need to be strong with humans on their side. They were unbeatable!

"You'll make friends with Roberto in no time, too!" Hamtaro said. "That's saying he doesn't starve him," Boss grunted.

"I'm not going back."

Everyone stared at Kaito. "Why not?" Hamtaro asked. "Why should I? That human kept me locked up in a prison until I finally escaped," Kaito answered. "A cage isn't a prison," the tall brown hamster corrected. Kaito thought otherwise. "Heck, why not go back? It's a place to sleep, free food to get, and you get to run on those whiz wheels I hear so much about," Boss said.

This was unbelievable. Still, he wanted to fit in here as well as possible. In order to do thatâ€| he'd have to accept this. "I guess soâ€|" he sighed quietly in defeat. A hamster suddenly walked in from the clubhouse door. "Sorry I'm late," Panda apologized, walking in.

He sat down at the table near Kaito. "Mimi was late for school." He turned to Kaito and smiled. "That was pretty weird yesterday, huh?" All eyes were on the two. They obviously wanted to know every detail of what Panda was talking about.

Panda was quick to explain. He told how Kaito had suddenly shown up in front of his cage and how he let him in before Roberto tried to get him out again. "That proves it. Roberto is your owner," the hamster in the apron had interrupted. Going on, Panda explained that after being bitten by Kaito(which caught everyone's surprise), Roberto made the cage fall over. Then Mimi showed up and a whole bunch of yelling took place. Kaito noticed that Panda didn't mention how he had bitten Mimi when she went to grab him. Panda finished with telling how Roberto left with Kaito when Mimi's mother came home.

"That _was_ pretty weird," Boss remarked.

* * *

>What'd I say? Boring, right? The ending sucks, too(I couldn't think of anything). I'll tell you now, though, something interesting is

gonna happen soon. Although, it has nothing to do with Kaito or the Ham-Hams. It's a bit of a random thing that might never be explained thoroughly(but don't worry, you won't be confused). Anywayâ€| stick around for Chapter 17: Two Opposites! <div>

17. Chapter 17: Two Opposites

Chapter 17: Two Opposites

"He was asking you about Hamtaro?"

"Not Hamtaro really. Just about hamsters."

Two girls were walking down the sidewalk, heading home from school. Kana had started the conversation. She was Laura's best and first friend she had since she moved to this town, which must've been more than a year ago now. Kana's hair, unlike Laura's short red-brown hair, was long and brown. She was also a bit taller than Laura.

The two had met on Saturday, three day ago, the same day Roberto had shown Laura the hamster he found. The argument had made Laura a bit touchy that day, concerning Kana. When Kana asked what was wrong, Laura simply said she didn't feel like talking about it.

Now Laura was in a better mood, and she was fine with answering the question when it came up again. "I wonder why he'd want to know that," Kana said. "He found a hamster the night before," Laura replied carelessly.

"Really? Did he keep it?" Kana asked, sounding interested. Laura knew Kana probably wanted to see it. They both loved hamsters. "I don't know. He said it was sick and he couldn't afford to take it to the vet," Laura answered. "Aw. That's too bad," Kana replied, looking down. She probably thought it had died.

"So, why were you mad?" Kana suddenly asked, as if forgetting how the conversation had even started. "As usual, we started arguing and nothing got accomplished," Laura admitted. Nothing ever got accomplished when they spoke to each other.

"I see. That makes sense. You looked really irritated the other day," Kana said. "Oh, I'm sorry if I ruined the dayâ€|" Laura apologized quietly. "No. It was no problem at all," Kana quickly said. Laura smiled. She loved the way Kana always thought about others.

"Well, I've got to do some errands. See you tomorrow?" Kana concluded as they stopped at a corner in the city. "Yeah, see ya!" Laura waved as Kana left.

The rest of the walk home was quiet, obviously, but it didn't bother her. She'd usually offer to help Kana with her errands, but there was going to be an exam in school soon, and she hadn't studied at all. "Typical of me," she said quietly to herself.

Laura was only two blocks from her house when she heard a voice. "When my mother died I was very young, and my father sold me while yet my tongue could scarcely cry 'weep,' 'weep,' 'weep,' 'weep.' So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep."

The voice sounded distance, and yet very close. Laura looked over when she past a house and stopped. On the house's roof was somebody sitting. She thought he recognized him. She had to squinch her eyes to make sure. "Jiei-kun?"

She was right. The person immediately sat up and stopped speaking. She hardly recognized him. He was wearing dark clothes and a strange black hat. In his hand was a brush made of wire, it looked like. His face also looked a bit dirty.

"What are you doing?" She couldn't help but ask. "What does it matter to you?" Roberto replied with disregard. Laura held back a snapping reply and kept her "cool". "Well, it just looks awfully strange, is all. You know, it looks like you're trying to break into this house. With no excuse, I guess you are." She was forcing the answer out of him, and it was working.

"I'm sweeping the chimney!" Roberto quickly replied, holding up the brush. "Why?" Laura asked. "'Cause I have no money, no thanks to you," he answered. Laura was taken aback. What was he blaming _her_ for? "I had to spend all of my money taking care of that rat because I had no choice."

So it _was_ still alive. By now Laura knew that Roberto couldn't tell the difference of one rodent from another. She tried to ignore it, just not when he called her Hamtaro a rat. She suddenly realized what he was talking about.

"It's not my fault! I don't know what to do when a hamster gets sick, I already told you," Laura snapped. "Whatever!" Roberto stood up and carefully walked closer to the roof's edge. Laura couldn't help up clench her fist tensely. What if he fell?

"Why don't you make yourself useful and lift that ladder, it fell?" Roberto said, pointing to a ladder on its side on the ground. Laura could burst out laughing, but she was too angry at the way he had said that. "So I'm useless otherwise, huh?" She asked. "Pretty much," Roberto answered, grinning.

"Well, see how useful you are when you're stuck up there all day!" Laura snarled, turning and walking away. "Hey, wait! C'mon!" Roberto called after her quickly. She stopped and there was a pause. "What were you singing?" She suddenly asked. "Huh?"

"Before you saw me, you were singing something," Laura answered. Roberto looked to the side, blushing slightly. "I wasn't singing!"

"What was it?" Laura asked again. "It was a poem" called _The Chimney Sweeper_, " Roberto answered reluctantly. Laura hesitated. "What's the rest of it?" Roberto looked surprised, making Laura blush.

His answer only made Laura angry again. "These people aren't paying me to tell poems. Are you gonna get that ladder, or what?" he prompted. "Or what!" Laura answered, turning abruptly and walking back to the sidewalk.

Roberto didn't call for her this time. As she was about to continue to her home, she side-glanced to see Roberto hop off the roof and get

the ladder himself. If he could just do that, why did he ask her to do it?

Laura was only a few steps from her yard when she stopped again. She really wasn't in the mood for studying all of a sudden, but all of her friends were busy. "I wonder how Mimi-chan is doing," she asked herself. Before she knew it she had turned around and started heading to the young child's house. She hadn't visited her in a while.

When she reached Mimi's house she saw her in the front yard, to her surprise, playing with something. When she got closer she saw it was her hamster, Panda, and another hamster that looked strangely familiar. "Laura-nee-chan!" Mimi squeaked with delight when she saw her.

"Hi, Mimi-chan. How are you doing?" Laura asked, kneeling down. "I'm fine, so is Panda," Mimi quickly replied. "Who's that?" Laura asked, looking at the brown hamster. "He doesn't have a name yet. Or, if he does, Roberto-niichan hasn't told me yet," Mimi smile. "'Roberto-niichan?!'" Laura suddenly echoed loudly, surprising Mimi. "Yeah, this one belongs to him," Mimi said. "But he bites."

Laura suddenly remembered where she had seen the hamster. "He lent it to you?" She asked. She felt like asking how Mimi even knew a guy like Roberto. He seemed far from the type of guy that's good with younger kids.

"No. He's come to visit Panda again," Mimi answered. "Roberto-niichan will probably come to pick him up soon again."

So that was how. The little rodent must've escaped on him one day and made its way here. She wondered if she should go back and tell Roberto it was here. "No way!" She quickly answered herself aloud, surprising Mimi again.

"Do you wanna play with us?" Mimi asked. "Uh, sure," Laura replied, collecting herself again. Thinking of Roberto always made her angry. She should just forget about him.

Laura did little "playing" with Mimi. How could they play with two hamsters; plus when one bit? They found themselves mostly talking about random things while watching the two hamsters interact with themselves. According to Mimi, that was what she and Roberto were doing after they met, not that Laura really cared.

Before she knew it the sun was beginning to set and she was forced to say goodbye. As if on cue, the brown hamster suddenly ran off. Right in the direction of Roberto's house, Laura noticed.

Probably coincidence, she thought, heading home.

* * *

>The Chimney Sweeper (c) William Blake

I personally really liked this chapter. Roberto and Laura are so fun to play together. The next few chapters will be all about them(with a twist).

I found that chimney sweep poem by chance while I was lookin' up stuff for chimney sweepers. Roberto was wearing the outfit they wore in the 1800s. Anyway, stay tuned for Chapter 18: A New World!

18. Chapter 18: A New World

Chapter 18: A New World

Roberto had come home late that night, to his mother's dismay. "Where were you? What's with your clothes? You're filthy, take a shower. Dinner's gotten cold; you'll have to heat it up. Study for that exam you've got soon. Don't go to bed too late."

Roberto obeyed every word. He had never told his mother just where he was working; only that he was working to refill his wallet and pay for his two animals. "They're not worth it." He had to hear her say that every day.

It wasn't that she was mean or was a bad parent; she just didn't like animals. She was the complete opposite of her own father, in that way, who owned a farm. Roberto had gotten his love for animals from him. He had lived with his grandfather before they moved to this town. The only good thing about moving here, Roberto thought, was that he got to see less of his own father.

Roberto wasn't able to study much if his mother expected him in bed before too late. He was about to lie down in his bed before he noticed his hamster, who he had recently named Flute, chattering restlessly in the cage. He was holding the cage bars closest to his bed.

As if agreeing to whatever Flute was saying, Samba began whining quietly, staring at Roberto expectantly. He sighed with a smile. "Okay, okay. But not too long, 'kaasan is sleeping," he said.

Roberto sat on his bed and leaned against a wall, after picking up his flute from the table. Animals must've really loved music, he thought. They always seemed so mesmerized whenever he played. Plus, it was the only time Flute actually looked happy when a carrot wasn't around.

When he was done Samba was asleep and Flute crawled to the edge of his cage, apparently satisfied. "Hmm, I thought hamsters were nocturnal," Roberto suddenly realized. _Well, not this one,_ he thought, as Flute curled up in a corner. His hamster was very strange in a number of ways. He hadn't yet been able to give Flute a full-body groom without him escaping his clutches before even giving him a second stroke with the small brush.

Roberto lay down eventually and just thought. _What was up with Haruna today? _He suddenly wondered. It was almost like the two were attracted to each other just to make themselves upset. "Whateverâ€¦" he said quietly, looking out his window.

Roberto must've fallen asleep sometime soon after that thought, because it was the last thing he remembered when he woke up again. Although something was different this morning. He hadn't woken up to his alarm clock or Flute's squeaky wheel. Plus, it was dark.

Perhaps it was still very early. Roberto lay back down, but found another thing off. Where was his pillow? His sheets? Why did it feel like he wasn't lying on his bed anymore? And what was that strange aroma? He sat up again and slowly stood up. Why did his legs feel shorter?

Hands reaching out, Roberto slowly walked forward until he reached a wall. Upon pushing it, he found that it could easily be pushed out, like a drape, though it felt nothing like one. When he walked out he had to rub his eyes twice before processing what he was seeing.

Roberto saw trees; lots of trees. On the trees grew mushrooms lined up like stairs and twig-made huts on branches and larger mushrooms. Above were the high tree tops. The leaves shielded this area from much sunlight. The shadows of the leaves left unique markings below them.

Roberto himself was standing on a large leaf sticking out of a fern bush close to the ground. Behind him were three leaves put together like a box, making the small room he had just exited.

"I'm dreaming?" He asked himself. There were a lot of things illogical about what was happening. How did he suddenly get here from his bed? How could mushrooms, leaves, and trees be so big? If not, how could he be so small?

Roberto looked over the edge of the leaf. The ground was covered in undergrowth and tall bushes. There was a bush in front of him, too. He climbed on it and used it to get closer to this little "village". More bushes were next to it, leading upward like stairs. He climbed until he was led to what seemed like the center of the village.

It was a large lily pad, it looked like, somehow growing out of the dry ground and standing firmly. In the middle of the lily pad was a beautiful, even if not bloomed, lotus flower. It was all different colors, like the rainbow. Roberto didn't know flowers got that colorful.

The lily pad surface dipped in slightly around the flower and Roberto noticed a bit of water there. He leaned over it and looked down, only to stagger back in shock. Slowly, he looked again.

Unbelievable. Was this real? His face was white; well, very white. His eyes were large and black with only a hint of green. He had big round ears and a small pink nose. His hands, or paws now, were also pink. He was covered in white and red fur.

"I'm a rat!" Roberto yelled, examining his body all over. The only thing that was anything like him was his red spiky hair on his head. "I _am_ dreaming."

It was then that he heard a groan on the other side of the flower. Peeking over he saw another hamster, almost looking as awe-stricken as he was. Well, he was a hamster, too, right? Perhaps he could speak hamster, as well. He decided to try.

"Uh, excuse me," he began, revealing himself. "What-- who're you?!" the other hamster asked quickly, backing up. It had a female's voice,

but Roberto had guessed she was a girl when he saw her red-brown hair. Did all hamsters here have hair like humans?

Roberto then realized something. Her voice sounded very familiar. "What's your name?" He was almost afraid to ask. "Huh? I asked you first," the hamster replied. Now he was positive he knew where he heard that voice. "What are you doing in my dream?!" Roberto asked suddenly, pointing a finger at the hamster and leaning back slightly.

"What are you taking about? I don't even know you," the hamster replied. "Oh yeah? Well I know you, Har-un-a," Roberto said. The hamster looked shocked and speechless.

"You know, I have to say, you actually look better as a hamster than you do in your original form," Roberto teased with a sneer. Laura clenched her fists. "What?! You jerk!"

"So, 'Jerk' is your name?" Roberto and Laura looked over to see a brown and white hamster approaching them. It wore a belt around its waist that had a sheath attached to it. "We were all wondering what the Messiah's name was. I am honored to finally meet you, Jerk-sama." The hamster bowed. He had a very soft voice. He had extra fur, which looked more like hair, on his head, which was tied with a small band in the back.

"What? Wait a minute. My name's not 'jerk,'" Roberto corrected. "It is not?" The hamster asked, looking up. "No," Roberto replied. "Then what is it?"

"Roberto," Roberto answered. "What?!" Laura suddenly yelled in surprise. "What are you doing here?!" She asked. "Nice to meet you, too, miss," Roberto mumbled sarcastically.

"Ah, then welcome, Roberto-sama! But, if that is your name, then why does this she-ham nickname you so?" The hamster asked, bowing again. "Well, it's not really a nickname. It's an insult," Roberto answered. "An insult! She shames you!"

Before Roberto knew what was happening, the hamster had run over to Laura, unsheathed his sword, and held its tip to her neck. Laura stood there, eyes wide, afraid to move. "She dares to insult the Messiah! She should have her limbs cut off!" The hamster spat.

"Whoa! Wait a minute!" Roberto ran over to the two as fast as he could on his small legs. "There'll be no cutting of the limbs here, okay? Now let's just put those pointy objects away." He slowly pushed down the hamster's sword. He resisted asking just where the hamster got such a small sword, though it was perfect for his size.

"But she insult you, my Messiah," the hamster said. "Well, first of all, I don't take her insults seriously. I mean, she calls me a jerk all the time. Secondly, I'm flattered by all of this 'Messiah' stuff, but it's really started to confuse me now," Roberto replied.

"You know not the prophecy?" the hamster asked.

"Prophecy?"

* * *

>Hehâ€¦ I like the way that brown hamster talks. Poorly drawn pictures of the hamster versions of Roberto and Laura are at the link at the bottom of my profile. Look if you dare. Anyway... weird, right? This is where my reality streak goes all swirly(although I can't see hamsters living in a kingdom reality). So it was my some-what reality streak. Well... at least hamsters with wings and magic aren't going to show up... as far as I've planned... Right, well, look forward to Chapter 19: The Prophecy! <div>

19. Chapter 19: The Prophecy

Chapter 19: The Prophecy

"'When the one with the visible heart appears, he will play the Praise that will replenish the Rainbow again for years to come,'" the brown hamster explained. He had introduced himself as Riki, but not before begging Roberto for forgiveness for not introducing himself sooner.

Riki had brought Roberto and, with less pleasure, Laura into a twig-crafted hut. There wasn't much in the hut. A few interesting tools and herbs, along with many other things Laura couldn't tell what were.

Laura was too bewildered at everything else that was going on to pay too much attention to Riki as he recited the prophecy. She noticed a few young hamsters peaking through the doorway. Every time one giggled slightly, Riki would shoo them away.

"You are in Agata Village, home to the Mira hamsters. We are in desperate need of your help, my Messiah," Riki explained. He had only eyes for Roberto. Laura felt like she wasn't even there.

"So what makes you think I'm this guy 'with the visible heart'?" Roberto asked. "That." Riki pointed to Roberto's chest. Indeed there was a red marking that was somewhat shaped like a heart there. "Ohâ€¦" Roberto replied, making a fake smile. "It does look like a heart," Laura agreed. "Not helping," Roberto muttered, still fake-smiling. "Who said I was trying to help?" Laura replied coldly.

"Please! The Mira hamsters are all eager to meet you." Riki seemed to have deliberately interrupted their conversation, which would've probably ended in an argument anyway. He got up and led Roberto outside.

Following, Laura finally saw just how many hamsters were in this village. They were everywhere; on the ground, on the tree branches and mushrooms, even on the treetops. They all stared expectantly at Roberto, making him look noticeably awkward.

Riki nearly forced Roberto to go on the large lily pad in the center of the village. "My people, the one with the visible heart has finally arrived!" Riki yelled out loudly. Suddenly, everyone began cheering. They threw their paws in the air and rejoiced.

"This is what you get for being so cocky about being called a

Messiah," Laura whispered next to Roberto. Apparently she hadn't whispered soft enough when a hamster stepped forward. "Who is this bitch that speaks to the Messiah so rudely?" He grunted.

What did he just call her?

"Perhaps she'd like to learn her respects." The hamster unsheathed his sword, which was, like Riki's, around his waist. He gave Laura no time to explain herself as he raised his sword and threw it down.

"Stop!!"

The voice echoed across the whole forest and then all was silent. Laura had flinched and opened her eyes slowly, wondering why she hadn't felt the sword strike her. She widened them with surprise when she saw Roberto standing in front of her, arms spread apart protectively.

"Jiei-kunâ€|" Laura could hardly speak. The hamster with the sword had stopped right at Roberto's wrist, but not before cutting it enough to make it bleed. He quickly withdrew his sword and bowed. "Forgive me, Messiah," he begged.

Roberto lowered his arms, but didn't move, or change his now serious expression. It made Laura feel strange to see him look like that. He was always so careless and oblivious. She had never seen him serious, let alone protective.

"I don't care what she calls me. There will be no punishments," Roberto ordered. The hamsters shifted slightly, as if uncertain Roberto knew what he was talking about. "Understand?" He asked louder. Most of the hamsters nodded slowly, while the others looked at each other in confusion.

"All right, nowâ€| you've all seen the Messiah. Please return to your homes," Riki suddenly said quickly. The hamsters slowly began to disperse, muttering amongst themselves. "Please come with me," he then said to Roberto, walking off.

He led them into a bush on the far edge of the village. He pushed a large leaf aside to reveal an entrance. He and Roberto walked in, but before Laura could, Riki stopped her. "No. This is a spiritual place. No strangers may enter."

"Wait. Why?" Roberto asked. "It is village policy. Please respect," Riki answered, quickly bowing. "Is that all right?"

"Well, as long as they leave her alone," Roberto replied. Laura was getting tired of this. She wasn't used to being protected. "I can take care of myself!" She quickly snapped, before turning and leaving.

"I know not how you can put up with such behavior from a she-ham like her," Riki snorted as he and Roberto made their way into the entrance of the bush. The inside was beautiful. It was like a cave. The walls shown with all different shades of dark purple, blue, and green, as if especially greeting him.

"Well, I get used to it," Roberto replied, looking around. "Is someone so rude a friend of the Messiah?" Riki asked, sounding a bit disgusted. Roberto didn't answer. Would he really call Laura a "friend"?

"Here we are," Riki said before long, not pushing his question. They had reached a larger room with tall wooden walls. The farthest wall in front of them had some sort of writing on it.

"The Praise," Riki introduced proudly. Getting closer, Roberto could see what the writing really was. They were notes; music notes. "A score," he said aloud. "You can read it?" Riki asked incredulously. "Yeah. Do Mi Do" it's easy," Roberto answered, reading the first three notes.

"Amazing! You really are, without a doubt, the Messiah!" Riki suddenly said quickly. "Huh?" Roberto asked. "No one was ever able to read these characters but the Messiah before you. And to believe I doubted you-- I mean, I never doubted you! It's just, well, we've been waiting for the Messiah for so long, one could only wonder when someone would be bold enough to pretend."

Roberto wasn't really paying attention. _There was a Messiah before me?_ He thought. Riki led Roberto outside again after assuring him multiple times that he didn't mind being doubted, as Riki had taken his silence as a bad sign.

"Great! You shall play the Praise tomorrow night," Riki said happily. "With what?" Roberto asked, ignoring for now the hundreds of other questions inside him. "The divine instrument from the Messiah before you, of course," Riki answered, simply.

Riki quickly ran up to his hut after they had reached the lily pad again and came back with an item. Roberto couldn't find Laura from where he was. When he saw the item, he couldn't help but smile. "It's just like the flute I have at home!" He said. "It is called a flute?" Riki asked after Roberto took the instrument. "Yeah. An Indian Flute to be more exact."

"Wonderful! For years we have been wondering what the divine instrument was called after the last Messiah left us with it," Riki said. "You can play it?" He then asked. "Of course," Roberto answered.

Riki seemed to want to say something else, but held it in for a moment, then suddenly let it out. "Please, will you play something for me?"

"What?" Roberto was taken aback by the sudden request. "Oh, please, Messiah! I deeply wish to hear the divine instrument at work," Riki begged, bowing. "I-I guess," Roberto hesitated. He stared at the flute for a moment, before holding it up to his lips and playing.

Roberto thought up a few tunes in his head every now and then. He'd write them down and play them a few times. He loved writing music, but he'd never be able to become a composer; his father wouldn't allow it.

Roberto pushed the thoughts away as he finished. "Incredible! Marvelous! Fantastic!" Riki praised. Roberto couldn't help but blush. "You think? I was thinking of making it little faster." Naturally, he wasn't too proud of all of his songs.

"I look forward to hearing the Praise played tomorrow night," Riki said. "Um, about thatâ€¦ Can I, like, practice it, or something?" Roberto asked. "Oh, heavens no! The prophecy clearly states that the Messiah knows the Praise by heart," Riki quickly answered. "Well, sorry for not listening for the 'fine speechâ€¦'" Roberto muttered quietly.

Riki didn't hear him as he began to walk away. "Please make yourself at home in our humble village. Any Mira hamster will be happy to serve your every whim." And then he was gone, back to his hut, leaving Roberto to stare after him.

* * *

>Well, there you go. The explanation doesn't clear too much up, but it'll get there. Poor Laura's being harassed and Roberto's being over-estimated. One would guess this'll end in a disaster. Well, I never said anything! You'll just have to wait and see. With that said, stick around for Chapter 20(whoo hoo, 20!): Having Fun! <div>

20. Chapter 20: Having Fun

Chapter 20: Having Fun

Roberto just stood there on the giant lily pad. _Greatâ€¦ Now what?_ His thoughts were interrupted when someone tugged at his fur. He looked down. "Messiah-san, is it true that you're magical?" A young hamster ask with a smile.

There were three young hamsters, smaller than Roberto. They all looked up at him expectantly. "Err, well, no. I'm not magical," he answered awkwardly. "Oh, mama said you were," the young hamster said, sounding slightly disappointed. "Um, hey, kidâ€¦ can you tell me what this Rainbow thing is?" Roberto asked, deciding that asking a kid might be better than asking someone older, who would think he should know this stuff.

"That, of course," the child answered, pointing to the large flower on the lily pad. "It's supposed to bloom every night and protect the village from evil spirits, but it stopped blooming a few weeks ago. Ever since evil spirits have been haunting us at night."

"The Messiah's supposed to know this," another kid said. "My mama said the Messiah's been sleeping for a long time. Maybe he forgot!" The third kid suggested. He was holding a round nut. "Y-Yeah, I forgot. Hey, is there anything else you can remind me of?" Roberto asked, taking this chance.

"The Messiah has to play the Praise and make the Rainbow bloom again," a kid answered. Roberto sighed. "Of courseâ€¦" _This is outrageous._ The first kid tugged at his fur again. "Hey, Messiah-sanâ€¦"

"Oh, please just call me Roberto," Roberto insisted. "Okay. Do you wanna play kickit with us?" the kid asked. "What's 'kickit'?" Roberto inquired. "It's a game," the young hamster answered simply. "Duh!" The second kid scoffed to the first.

"You kick the nut around," the hamster with the round nut explained. He reminded Roberto of Flute a bit, somehow. It was probably just his black belly, for the rest of him was a mixture of gray, brown, and white.

"What's the objective?" Roberto asked. The kids cocked their heads. "How do you win?" The kids looked at each other. "No one wins," the first hamster said.

"Hmm, well then, why don't I introduce you to a little game called soccer?"

"He shoots, he scores! And the crowd goes wild!" The three young hamsters soon joined in Roberto's imitation of a crowd cheering. It hadn't been long before he was able to teach them most of the rules of soccer after they moved to a large, flat rock.

The three playful bowed to his feet, smiling. "Oh, great Roberto, please tell us how to become soccer champions like you," Pam begged. Roberto had also learned all of their names. The 'leader' was Pam, the arrogant one was Chen, and the black-bellied one was Miku.

"Well, you know, it takes a lot to become a great soccer champion like myself," Roberto claimed. He was obviously enjoying this as he made a superior pose. "Please teach us, oh great one!" The three begged, giggling slightly.

"It takes many years of practice to become as great as I. Try as you will, but I doubt you will ever reach my level," Roberto replied with a deep voice. "The great one has spoken!" Pam cheered. The three suddenly stood up and lifted Roberto from the ground. "Whoa!"

"All hail the great soccer champion Roberto!" The three yelled. Roberto couldn't help but laugh. "Hey, put me down!"

"Pam, Chen, Miku! It's time for dinner!" Someone suddenly called. "Aw, mama!" Pam sighed. They nearly dropped Roberto to the ground. "We gotta go," Chen said, as he and Pam began to leave. Miku was the only one to stay and bow to Roberto. "Thank you for spending time with us," he said politely. "No problem," Roberto replied, getting up.

"I heard that the Messiah before you slept up there." Miku pointed to an isolated hut far above them. "All the way up there?" Roberto asked. "Good-bye," Miku said, bowing again before leaving.

Roberto stared after him, suddenly feeling kind of lonely. He was used to it, sure, but it was inevitably noticeable right after having fun with someone. He looked down at the round nut they had left. Perhaps he could still have fun.

Roberto picked up the nut with his foot and balanced it, before tossing it in the air, spinning around quickly, and kicking it with his other foot as it began descending to the ground again. The nut

flew off the rock and fell to the ground way below him. He had forgotten there were no walls.

"That didn't last longâ€¦" For a moment Roberto was wondering if he could find another nut, before he saw a very old looking hamster approaching him. It coughed once, before beginning to speak in a rasping voice.

"You are the one with the visible heart, correct?" She asked. "I guess so," Roberto replied carelessly. He was getting tired of these nicknames. The old she-ham bowed. "It is time to eat, please come with me." With that, she turned and walked away slowly. Roberto followed.

Roberto noticed how dark it had become as he was following the old hamster down to the forest floor. He could faintly see a small flicker of light under the field of undergrowth. Upon getting closer, he saw that it was a very small fire the hamsters had cleverly kept under control without burning the leaves.

Close to the fire were all of the hamsters. _Now_ Roberto could see how many there really were. The population stretched across the undergrowth, but not farther than his eyes could see. The village must've been bigger than he thought to fit so many hamsters.

They were all neatly sitting in to lines facing each other. The old hamster seated Roberto at the end of the lines so that he was facing everyone. He felt his face grow hot when everyone suddenly stared at him.

"We've prepared the best for you," a hamster said, walking up to him with a leaf. He placed it in front of Roberto. On the leaf were parts of a carrot, an apple, and some corn. _Must be a hamster thingâ€¦_ He thought, thanking the hamster. It explained why Flute liked carrots so much.

Another hamster then stood up. He was old, like the she-ham that brought Roberto there. "This is a special dinner indeed. Like ten years ago, the Messiah is sitting with us again, soon to save us from total chaos. We shall show our gratitude with a festival tonight."

Ten years must be a lot to hamsters, Roberto thought as excited murmurs began arising. Soon everyone began eating. "Does it please you?" Riki asked him. He hadn't even noticed the brown hamster was near him until now. "Yeah," he answered, nibbling at the corn. Honestly, he wasn't crazy about fruits and vegetables.

After dinner the festival began. Riki seated Roberto with a group of hamsters that were watching a few others throw flaming sticks in the air. Soon, everybody seemed to have forgotten all about him. He took this chance to sneak away. It was easy. Everybody was paying attention to all of the activities taking place.

Roberto walked far enough so that he could hardly hear the festival. He stopped at an area where the moon's strong rays made its way through the undergrowth and brightened the ground. It lined his fur with a silver tint. The moon was just about the only thing familiar to him here.

Roberto sat down next to a leave and looked at the "divine instrument" Riki had given him. After a pause, he put it to his mouth and began playing.

* * *

>The young hamsters aren't going to show up again any time soon, but don't forget Miku. He's gonna play an important role in the storyâ€| eventually. Anyway, I won't be able to put up the chapters as fast as I've been lately. Regents is haunting me and the uploaded chapters have caught up with the future chapters. I have little time to type more up, but I shall try. So, stay tuned for Chapter 21: Reassurance!
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21. Chapter 21: Reassurance

****Chapter 21: Reassurance ****

As Roberto played the "sacred" flute, the world seemed to vanish around him. He played a song he had never heard or thought of before. The notes just came to him as he played; one after another. He wasn't used to liking his own music, but he liked this one.

After a while he stopped and the notes left his mind completely. The song wasn't over, but he wasn't really in the mood for playing right now. A quiet wind disturbed the leaves as he looked up.

Roberto took this time to finally let everything that was happening sink in. An uncountable amount of questions suddenly entered his head. Where was he? Why was he here? How would he get back? Would he ever get back? Why did he have to be this "Messiah"?

"What are you doing?" The voice broke Roberto from his thoughts and he looked over in surprised. It was Laura. He had almost forgotten she'd come here with him. He wondered how he should reply.

Roberto wasn't in the mood for arguing, though Laura looked ready to snap back if he did. He looked up. "Nothingâ€| just looking at the moon," he answered. He wondered how long she had been there and if she heard him playing.

"Ohâ€| It is pretty tonight." Apparently not. There was another pause as the two just stared at the moon. "Hey, Jiei-kun, this is all a dream, right?" Laura suddenly asked.

"I don't think so," Roberto replied. Laura seemed surprised. "What do you mean? It has to be a dream. I mean, look at us! We're not even human anymore."

"I know it sounds crazy, but I've convinced myself that we're not dreaming. It's impossible to know you're dreaming while dreaming." Laura had question written on her face and Roberto went on. "When dreaming, you're mind is too busy making up everything that's happening to bother thinking if it makes sense or not. Of course, when you wake up you'll think how bogus your dream might have been. But while dreaming, you'll never find yourself thinking, 'this makes no sense, I must be dreaming.' Besides, have you ever dreamt anything so clear before? I mean, I've never had a dream where a whole day went by. When I could count the minutes. When things went step by

step instead of skipping around."

"Yeah, butâ€¦" Laura still looked unsure. "And, it might not be proof to you, but everyone always says you can't get hurt in a dream," Roberto said. He was referring to the cut on his wrist, which still showed.

"But, then how will we get back? What if we never get back?" Roberto was suddenly hearing his own questions in someone else's voice. He was surprised to see Laura's eyes a bit watery, too. "What ifâ€¦ we're stuck here forever? As hamstersâ€¦ If we can never go homeâ€¦" She couldn't go on anymore as she buried her face in her paws.

"Hey, calm down." Roberto quickly got up and walked over to Laura, putting his paws on her shoulders comfortingly. "C'mon, we'll be fine. We'll definitely go home again soon. I don't know how, but he willâ€¦ Those hamsters told me that the last Messiah left, too. Maybe he was in the same situation as us. I'll just play the Praise tomorrow and we'll go home," he assured.

Laura stared at the ground. "Are you sure?" Roberto wasn't about to lie to her. "No. But I have hope," and, with a teasing grin, he added, "and I'm not about to go off crying like a lost child."

"I'm not crying!" Laura yelled defiantly. "Right, so there's dirt in your eyes?" Roberto asked.

"Yeah."

"That's the oldest one in the book."

There was a sudden silence. The mood between them was finally how it should be, or, at least, how they were used to it being. Now that Roberto had the old Laura back, he didn't feel so lonely. They were in this together.

"Why do you have to play this stupid 'Praise' thing, anyway," Laura asked, regaining herself and wiping away the last of her tears. "I don't knowâ€¦ I gotta rid this place of some evil spirits, or something," Roberto replied casually, shrugging. "That's outrageous," she muttered. "That's what I thought. But these hamsters are just convinced that I'm the one to do itâ€¦"

Another pause went by. "So, now that you aren't being paid,"-- the beginning of Laura's sentence was certainly true, these hamsters didn't plan on paying Roberto back in any way-- "wanna finish that poem you were singing before?"

"I wasn't singing," Roberto repeated, crossing his arms. Laura stared at him expectantly. Roberto sighed in defeat. "Fineâ€¦"

"When my mother died I was very young,
> And my father sold me while yet my tongue
 Could scarcely cry
'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!
> So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.<p>

"There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
> That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved: so I said,
 'Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare,
> You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.'<p>

"And so he was quiet; and that very night,
> As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight, -
 That thousands of
sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
> Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.<p>

"And by came an angel who had a bright key,
> And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
 Then down a
green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
> And wash in a river, and shine in the sun.<p>

"Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
> They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind;
 And the angel told
Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
> He'd have God for his father, and never want joy.<p>

"And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
> And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
 Though the
morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
> So if all do their duty they need not fear harm..."<p>

"That's kind of sad," Laura comment when he finished. "It's supposed to be," Roberto replied simply. "I heard it a few years ago."

"You'll wind up getting your hair spoiled, too," Laura teased. "You think I wore that hat for style? Besides, I probably won't do it again. Unlicensed chimney sweeps don't get paid nearly enough," Roberto replied.

The two had seated themselves by a leaf as Roberto had been telling the rest of the poem. "That's good. It's dangerous, you know?" Laura said. "If you don't know what you're doing. A lot of little kids had to learn how to sweep chimneys during the 19th century," he replied.

"And no thanks to you, I had to risk hurting my feet jumping off that roof to get the ladder. You've not been much help for me lately, you know," Roberto grunted. "Well sorry I'm not a book of instructions. You keep pissing me off and I'll make you regret it," Laura defended. "Oh, how scary," Roberto mocked, smiling.

He felt strange. Roberto had never talked to Laura this long, especially not when no one else was around. He didn't think it was possible for him to feel this comfortable around her. "Hey, when do you think those evil spirits come out?" Laura asked. "Why? You scared?" Roberto smiled, raising an eyebrow. "No! I was just wondering," she answered quickly.

Actually, that was a good question, Roberto thought. The three young hamsters had told him they come out every night. He wondered if they were even real. _Maybe they mistook a bird for an evil spirit._

"I'm sure it's nothing muchâ€¦ I mean, these _are_ hamsters we're talking about." Laura nodded slowly. Roberto then stood up, stretching a bit. "Well, I don't know how late it is, but I'm guessing now would be a nice time for sleep," he yawned. "I wonder if the festival is still going on," Laura wondered, getting up, as well.

"I hope it isâ€¦ or else they'll notice I left," Roberto replied, putting a paw to his chin and looking up. "Then let's hurry!" Laura said loudly, smiling, as she ran past Roberto and grabbed his paw. "Whoa!" Roberto yelped as she pulled him with her.

The two never noticed dark figures making their way above them in the trees.

* * *

>The Chimney Sweeper (c) William Blake That uploading chapters later thingâ€¦? Oh yeah, I liedâ€¦ Well, sort of. There will be delays every now and then, but I'll mostly upload every other day. The only reason I upload so fast is because there are still a lot of chapters to go. But I promise after this thing in Agata Forest is over things will start to speed up. That said, look forward to Chapter 22: Evil Spirits Attack!

22. Chapter 22: Evil Spirits Attack!

****Chapter 22: Evil Spirits Attack!****

When Roberto and Laura reached the festival again the hamsters showed no signs of packing up and going to sleep. "They _are_ nocturnal," Roberto said. "Though mine isn't," he added quieter to himself.

"Oh, yeah. About your hamster," Laura began, remembering something. "Did it run away yesterday?" Roberto cocked his head. "No. He was in his cage last night." Laura seemed surprised. "Really?" Roberto raised an eyebrow suspiciously. "Why?"

"Err, no reason. Just wondering," Laura answered quickly. "If you're thinking I'm a bad owner, then you're wrong. If I can take care of a dog, I can take care of a rat," Roberto said. "But it's a hamsterâ€¦" Laura muttered, shifting her eyes.

"Messiah-sama, we wondered where you had gone," Riki said, walking over to them. He grabbed Roberto's paw and pulled him away. "We must hurry."

"Ah, butâ€¦" Roberto looked back at Laura, who wasn't following. Riki dragged him to the center of all of the hamsters, who were now silent and staring at him. "You must play the divine instrument before the evil spirits come," Riki demanded.

"But, I thought I had to do that tomorrow?" Roberto asked. "That is to permanently keep them away. They will come tonight, soon. You must hurry!" Riki prompted.

Roberto looked at his empty paws. _Shit! I must've left it back there! _he thought, looking around frantically. "Where is the instrument?!" Riki asked quickly. "Umâ€¦" Roberto didn't know what to say. He looked at the crowd, trying to point out Laura's face. He couldn't find her.

"It'sâ€¦ uhâ€¦" Roberto was interrupted by an ear-shattering shriek. Shadows suddenly sped through the undergrowth from above. At least, it seemed like they were coming from above. Roberto could see nothing above the shadows, though.

More shrieks and screeches were sounded by the shadows as they rapidly made their way closer and around the hamster group. The hamsters huddled together in fear.

One of the shadows suddenly took form. It lifted itself from the ground and now looked like a dragging black cloud with beady white eyes. The other shadows did the same. "It's the evil spirits!" Riki yelled.

These were the evil spirits?! The shadows then suddenly lunged for the group all at once. Everyone scattered. Mothers screamed for their children as children cried for their mothers. Most of the hamsters were running for their lives, shadows close behind them. Roberto didn't know what to do.

He suddenly found himself surrounded by four hamster backs; one Riki's. The hamsters unsheathed their swords. "We'll protect you, Messiah-sama!" Riki said. A shadow confronted him and he slashed his sword through it. It left a mark, but only for a second. The shadow soon rejuvenated itself.

The hamsters kept slashing through each shadow that approached them. It was hopeless. The shadows outnumbered them by a mile and were slowly closing in. One hamster was tossed away easily by a shadow, another was slapped with strange black liquid, causing him to scream in pain.

The last two hamsters bravely swiped at the shadows, but were soon thrown away with little effort. Roberto was then left defenseless as the shadows got closer, white eyes glaring at him. They seemed more interested in him than the other screaming hamsters.

A shadow behind him threw black liquid at his leg. When it struck he felt a surge of burning pain. He grunted and grinded his teeth, trying to fight the pain and pay more attention on getting away.

Roberto saw an opening when a few shadows lunged at him at once. With all the strength he could muster in his short limbs, he dashes past the shadows and further into the forest. He had no idea where he was going; hopefully where the flute was.

When Roberto looked over his shoulder he could see the shadows following him at an amazing speed. Before he knew it, he was surrounded again. The shadows wasted no time this time. They threw drops of black liquid all over his body, making him yell in pain.

"Jiei-kun!!" Someone yelled. The shadows immediately stopped to see where the voice came from. It was Laura, of course, looking devastated. She had the flute, too. Roberto fell over, hardly able to fight the burning pain. "Jiei-kun!" Laura backed up as the shadows suddenly began approaching her.

"Harunaâ€¦!" Roberto struggled to regain his voice. "Play it!! Play the flute, Harunaaa!!!" Laura hesitated for a second, before throwing the flute to her lips and playing two random high-pitched notes.

The shadows suddenly screeched wildly, writhing around. And then, as

quick as they appeared, they disappeared. The black liquid on Roberto body disappeared, as well. Laura was out of breath and almost fell back. She snapped back to reality when Roberto began struggling to his feet.

"Jiei-kun, are you okay?!" She demanded, running over. Roberto was also catching his breath and it took him a moment to answer. "I'm fine" he said slowly. His body didn't hurt nearly as much anymore, but black dirt marked where the liquid had hit him.

"But you got hurt," Laura mumbled, examining his now gray fur. Roberto scratched his ear, smiling at the unfamiliar concern in her voice. "I'm kinda used to getting hurt. Anyway, we should go back to the others."

"Nothing much, huh?" Laura couldn't help but mock with a frown as they walked back. Roberto didn't reply. Any bit of doubt he had was gone. These hamsters meant what they said, that was for sure.

He had to resist limping. The leg that had been directly hit screamed in protest at every step he took. He was good at hiding pain, though, and Laura didn't seem to suspect anything.

When they reached where the festival had been, they saw only a few hamsters still there. Most were probably cowering in their homes. The hamster who had gotten hit on the face was being checked by a she-ham. The others looked unharmed in appearance.

Riki was the first to notice them. "Messiah-sama!" He yelled, nearly running over and falling to his knees. He bowed so low his nose touched the ground. "We were unable to protect you and you have gotten injured."

"It's okay. I'm fine" really," Roberto said, once again noticing a bit of concern in Laura's eyes. "We are ungrateful to you. Please, do not play the Praise tomorrow. We are unworthy," Riki begged. Roberto was surprised. He looked around at the still awe-stricken hamsters around him.

"No. I'm going to play the Praise tomorrow and stop these evil spirits from haunting you guys," Roberto replied sternly. Riki looked up and opened his mouth to protest, but Roberto stopped him. "And you're not going to stop me," he demanded.

Riki hesitated, before lowering his head again. "A-as the Messiah wishes. We are most thankful."

Roberto was then checked by the she-ham there. She stuck strange smelly, stinging herbs on his wounds and told him to rest. Her duty as a medic seemed to be more important to her than respecting him.

Riki then led him to the hut high above in the trees that Miku had mentioned. He said that only the Messiah could sleep there, giving Laura a not-so-friendly look. Laura seemed fine with it, but not without returning the look. Apparently she had gotten on someone's good side while there and they would let her stay with them.

Roberto bid her goodnight as she began stomping off and she replied a bit awkwardly. He frowned when she was gone. He really didn't want to

be alone. After asking if he wanted anything, Riki left him, as well.

Roberto couldn't imagine possibly falling asleep, so he sat down at the edge of the mushroom his hut was on, letting his small legs dangle over. He could see the whole village from so high up. It was then that he noticed it went farther into the forest than he had thought; though the huts back there were more isolated and hidden.

Roberto looked at the flute he had gotten back from Laura. Doubt returned to him. Would he really be able to play the Praise? It was then that the old she-ham who had led him to dinner walked up to his hut and sat down beside him, saying nothing, as if he were expecting her.

Roberto didn't know what to say. It was a while until the old hamster finally spoke up, surprising him slightly. "How old are you, boy?" She asked. Roberto didn't know how to answer. Should he say his real human age, or round it off to hamster years; not that he knew what human years were to hamster years?

The old hamster looked at him. "Your age," she asked again. When Roberto still didn't reply, she said more specifically, "Your real age."

Roberto twitched in surprise. "Whatâ€¦?" The old hamster looked forward, at the village. Her old, half-closed eyes held much wisdom in them. "I am called the wise obaasan here. I know what the hamsters here are blissfully unaware of. Here, you are as important as a god. But in your world you are nothing special."

Roberto twitched his ears. No one ever did like being called "nothing special". The obaasan either didn't notice his irritation or didn't care as she continued. "Do you like it here?"

Roberto hesitated before answering. "I suppose." "You would like to stay?" Roberto cocked his head in confusion. "Stay here forever and never go back to your human life."

Roberto gaped for a moment. Would he even consider it? Never going back! "No! I have to go back," he replied quickly. "Is your life as a human much to your like?" Obaasan asked, standing up. Roberto looked down. "It's okayâ€¦"

"It will be better than 'okay' here. Here you can play with the young ones until they are no longer young; here you can play the divine instrument to your heart's content and there will always be a happy audience; here you can live happily and play the Praise when the time comes again like you will tomorrow."

Roberto blinked slowly. Would he even live long enough to play the Praise again? Being a hamster, his life would be shortened by many years. Still, there weren't many things he loved about his human life. At least the way it was going now. The things he hated seemed to drown the things he loved. He shook his head quickly. No! He had to go back.

Roberto tried to think of more excuses to stay as he replied. "What about Lauraâ€¦? Why did she come here, anyway?" He asked,

accidentally changing the subject. "She does not belong here. She will have to go back to her home," obaasan answered.

Roberto didn't know if he should feel relieved or disappointed. The hamsters here didn't seem to like her very much, so she'd be better back at home as a human. "She was sent here by your thoughts as you were," obaasan explained.

Roberto slightly understood her. He was thinking about Laura before he fell asleep. "Then how did I get here?" He asked. "It was the will of the Great Guroki. No one asks 'how,'" the old hamster answered. Roberto wasn't going to bother asking who this "Guroki" character was.

Obaasan then began padding to the line of twigs leading lower to the village. "Think about my offer," she said, before leaving. Roberto stood up, staring after her.

* * *

>Yay, the chapter after this will rap up thisâ€¦ saga, if you will. Then I'll put in some much needed Kaito time. Anyway, thanks for the reviews. I'll just say now, I never said anything about a Roberto/Laura relationship. I know there are haters of the couple, tooâ€¦ I'm still not completely sure which direction to point them in. And Travis is still around, too, as is Laura's crush on him. If I do decide on a close Roberto/Laura relationship, then I'm sensing a conflict, neh? Right, well, stick around for Chapter 23: Playing the Praise!

23. Chapter 23: Playing the Praise

Chapter 23: Playing the Praise

Morning seemed to come so quickly. Roberto had accidentally fallen asleep outside after the obaasan left. Apparently he hadn't realized just how tired he was. Sunlight beaming through the treetops forced him to wake.

Roberto yawned and rubbed his eyes slowly, only to quickly widen them when he realized he was still in Agata Forest. Honestly, he had been hoping this really was all just a dream and that he'd wake up at home on his bed. Apparently his hopes were wrong.

Roberto made his way down to the lily pad. He could hear chattering in the huts he passed. They sounded excited, probably for what he was supposed to do that night. He twitched. Just how was he going to play the Praise?

Sure, it had all just come to him as if he had memorized it the night before, but who's saying that'll happen again? What would the hamsters do to him if he failed?

Roberto sighed, stopping when he reached the lily pad. "Good morning!" He looked up at the voice, seeing Laura walking toward him. She looked more cheerful now than she did yesterday.

"Good morning," Roberto replied less enthusiastically. "We finally get to go back home tonight," Laura reminded him with a smile. Of

course! That's why she was so happy. "Yeah." Roberto shifted uncomfortably, remembering what the obaasan told him the night before. She wanted him to stay there forever. But how could he? There were plenty of problems in his life, but it was the same for every living thing. He couldn't just give up the life he grew up with. It wasn't that easy to just start over.

Roberto nodded to himself, making Laura cock her head. He then smiled and more enthusiastically replied to the last thing Laura said, "Yeah, I can't wait!"

The day seemed to go by so slowly. It was just showing how things slow down when you're looking forward to something. The day went by with many hamsters crowding around Roberto, trying to give him offerings, as if he were some sort of god. He never had a moment of peace. A few times he'd look back to see Laura watching him with an amused grin.

There was one point when Roberto found time to play with the three youngsters again. He felt like he was in a competition as many hamsters watched and cheered, though most of them knew not the rules of the game.

When the game was over, Laura came over to him. "You're good with kids, huh?" She asked, as if surprised by it. "Yeah, I guess so. I used to play all the time with my sistâ€¦" Roberto's voice trailed off, as if he had said something wrong. "What?" Laura inquired. "Uh, nothing. Forget it," Roberto answered quickly, walking away to a group of hamsters that were calling him, leaving Laura to stare after him with a confused frown.

Night came before he knew it and the hamsters suddenly began distancing themselves from Roberto. Riki, the obaasan, and the other old hamster came up to him when the moon was high in the sky. "The Praise must be played just before the evil spirits come. Here." Riki handed him the flute.

Everyone took a step away from Roberto as he felt his doubt suddenly returning to him. He gripped the flute tightly and glanced at Laura, who was watching him along with everyone else. He had to do this. Not only Laura, but everyone in the village depended on him. He sighed and held the flute to his lips.

Like the night before, the notes just came to him. They echoed throughout the whole village and the trees seemed to rustle to the beat. A screech could be heard in the distance. "Here they come!" Someone screamed. Roberto forced himself to keep playing. He could see a light beginning to shine brightly behind him.

The hamsters didn't move as the evil spirits came into view and rapidly approached them. Roberto could feel their tension, though. It was then that the light behind him grew so bright he had to close his eyes. He heard the same wild screeches he had heard when Laura played the flute near them. When the light dimmed again the evil spirits were gone.

"It's bloomed! The Rainbow has bloomed!" Someone yelled with excitement. Roberto stopped playing when the notes left his head and turned around. He had to gape at the sight. The flower on the lily pad had opened up and shown with all of the colors of the rainbow.

The colors turned the forest into a place of mystical wonder.

A heavy breeze made the trees wave beautifully, as if they were happy, as well. "Amazing," Roberto heard Laura whisper near him. The obaasan then approached them. "Have you decided, Messiah?" She asked.

Roberto noticed how she wasn't calling him "boy" anymore; probably because everyone else was there. Laura looked confused. "Yes, I have. I've decided to go back. I have to. It's my life. It may be hard sometimes, but that's expected. I can't just give up everything I've lived for just for a simpler life."

To Roberto's surprise, the obaasan smiled. "You speak the words of the last Messiah," she said. Roberto frowned in confusion. Did that mean she was alive ten years ago?

"The Great Guroki shall send you home now. We are most grateful," the old hamster smiled. Before he could say anything, Roberto's eyes suddenly felt very heavy. "We will never forget what you have done for us." He could hardly hear her voice anymore as his eyes began getting blurry. He didn't have time to look at Laura before everything went black.

The next thing he heard was an irritating squeak. When it didn't stop, he sat up. "Noisyâ€|" He mumbled, looking at the cage next to him drowsily. He then widened his eyes, remembering everything that had happened.

Roberto quickly looked at his hands. He was a human again. He looked around. Samba was sleeping at the edge of his bed and Flute had just stopped running on his wheel, staring at him. Everything was back to normal now.

"You're late!" A boy accused as Roberto dashed into the school class room seconds after the bell rang. "I know! I slept lateâ€|" I had the weirdest dream," he sighed, putting a hand to his forehead.

"Me, too," Laura said next to him seemingly subconsciously. They both looked at each other in surprise for a short moment, before turning their backs on one another. "Not that my dream had anything to do with yours," Laura said abruptly. "Why would it?" Roberto asked.

It seemed as if the dream never really happened, at least, to Laura. Roberto wasn't so sure when he saw a cut on his wrist that morning.

* * *

>A somewhat short chapter, but I really wanted to wrap this up. The next chapter is kinda long. Anyway, I don't know what to say about what song the Praise was. Whatever you want, I suppose. I was thinking "Reset" - "Thank You" version from Okami(you know, that kickass wolf game). Anyway, the story takes an interesting twist next chapter when the one and only Sparkle entersâ€|" but I won't spoiler any moreâ€|" So, stay tuned for Chapter 24: Unfriendly Diva! <div>

****Chapter 24: Unfriendly Diva****

Roberto was acting weird that morning, Kaito noticed, but what was weird to him must've been normal to humans. He felt one step closer to understanding them better. He could only understand one word of human speech and it was usually yelled by someone downstairs, making Roberto hurry up.

Kaito thought about what had happened the day before as Roberto ran in and out of the room. After Panda told the Ham-Hams the story, they all decided to split up and do "fun" stuff together. Panda had invited him over his house. Mimi had tried to touch him a few times. Every time she did Panda would give him a cautious glance and Kaito would back away.

Panda seemed to respect the fact that Kaito was unused to human handling. He never asked any questions about it. Kaito liked him that way. He wasn't nosey like the other Ham-Hams.

After Roberto had left, Kaito escaped his cage, hopped to the window sill, and squeezed out of the slightly opened window. He dashed down the roof, into the gutter, and crawled down the conveniently placed wire. He could get used to this.

Kaito went straight to the clubhouse, making his way through the tunnel by following the scents of the Ham-Hams. When he walked in he was surprised to see most of them looking very bored.

"Hamha, Kaito-kun!" Hamtaro yelled when he saw him. "Hamha," Kaito stammered. "Good timing, we were just about to watch some TV," Boss said, leaning back on his chair. He held a black rectangular object.

"TV?" Kaito questioned. Boss pressed a button on the object and the black box on the smaller table suddenly lit up. Kaito was astounded to see moving pictures on it. "Don't tell me you've never seen a TV?" the gray hamster with glasses, who he learned was named Dexter, asked.

Kaito shook his head quickly. "It's a device we use to learn what's happening in the hamster world, as well to entertain ourselves," the tall brown hamster, Maxwell, explained. Kaito looked at the screen.

"And now, here's everyone's favorite singer, Sparkle! And her new song 'Take Me or Leave Me!' An announcer yelled on the TV. A white and light brown hamster was then shown. She wore two pink rubber bands at the sides of her head with a tuft of fur sticking out. She winked her eye and made a pose before beginning to sing.

"Every single day,
> I walk down the street
I hear people say: 'Baby's so sweet!'

> Ever since puberty
Everybody stares at me,
> Boys, girls I can't help it, baby.
So be kind, and don't lose your mind
> Just remember, that I'm your baby

"Take me for what I am!

> Who I was meant to be!
 And if you give a damn,
> Take me baby, Or leave me!<p>

"Take me baby, or leave me!

"A tiger in a cage
> Can never see the sun.
 This diva needs her stage, baby,
> Let's have fun!
 You are the one I choose;
> Folks would kill to fill your shoes!
 You love the limelight,
too, now, baby!
> So be mine, and don't waste my time
 Cryin', 'Oh honey bear are
you still my, my, my baby?' (Don't you dare!)

"Take me for what I am!
> Who I was meant to be!
 And, if you give a damn,
> Take me baby, or leave me!<p>

"No way, can I be what I'm not!
> But hey, don't you want your girl hot?
 Don't fight; don't loose
your head!

"It won't work!
> I look before I leap.
 I love margins and discipline.
> I make lists in my sleep, baby.
 What's my sin?
> Never quit.
 I follow through.
> I hate mess, but I love you.
 What to do with my impromptu,
baby?
> So be wise, 'cause this girl satisfies,
 You got a prize, but
don't compromise
> You're one lucky baby!<p>

"Take me for what I am! (Control freak!)
> Who I was meant to be! (A snob yet over attentive!)
 And, if you
give a damn! (A loveable droll, geek!)
> Take me baby or leave me!<p>

"That's it!
> The straw that breaks my back!
 I quit!
> Unless you take it back!<p>

"Take me for what I am
> Who I was meant to be (Who I was meant to be)
 And, if you give a
damn (and if you give a damn you better)
> Take me baby, or leave me (Take me baby, take me or leave me)

Take me baby or leave me
> Guess I'm leaving, I'm gone!"<p>

A commercial came on when she was finish. "Oh, I am so jealous. I wish I could z'ing like her," the white hamster, Bijou, said with a dreamy look in her eyes. "Why?" Kaito accidentally asked. He had taken a seat at the table while this "Sparkle" hamster was singing.

Bijou looked surprised. "Well, why not? She is so popular with her voice," she answered. Boss twitched and quickly jumped off his chair. "Your voice is much more beautiful!" He said quickly, blushing. "Oh, why thank you, Boss-kun," Bijou said, putting a paw to her cheek and looking down, embarrassed.

"Besides, who really likes hamsters like her?" Kaito asked.

Everyone looked at him, making him pause. He'd have to get used to this, apparently. "I've never met her, but, considering her song just now, I'm sure she's a snob, or something," he said, trying not to sound too prejudice.

"Ya' got that right!" The hamster with the apron, Howdy, agreed. "Huh?" Kaito asked. "We've met her a few times before," Hamtaro said. "She thinks we're weird, thoughâ€|" Oxnard said, looking down as if it were a personal insult.

"Well, there you go, thenâ€|" I'm sure her fans only like her because they think she's pretty and she's a star," Kaito replied. This was something he could actually talk about without getting confused. There were plenty of stars at his kingdom. They mostly entertained the king, though, not a whole audience. Some did perform in front of a live group, and, those who did soon got rumors spread about them. It was impossible to know if half of them were true or not.

"You may be rightâ€|" Bijou said, rethinking. Boss looked like he was about to say something, but Hamtaro spoke first. "I like you better as normal Bijou. If you were a ham-star, you wouldn't be able to spend time with us anymore."

Bijou's eyes sparkled. "Oh, Hamtaro! That makes me so happy!" She squeaked, blushing. Hamtaro cocked his head at her over-excited reaction, while Boss looked like he wanted to punch him. Kaito could guess what was happening just by looking at them.

The day went by with the Ham-Hams just talking and watching TV. Kaito guessed that even they had their calm moments. Before they knew it was almost time to leave. Most of the Ham-Hams left early, bored anyway. Kaito left when Hamtaro and Oxnard did. Since it was still kind of early, they decided to walk around the city. Kaito still didn't know this place that well, yet.

Even though, Kaito wasn't really listening as Hamtaro explained. "â€|and down there's Laura's schoolâ€|" and that's where Laura buys my sunflower seeds." He pointed down streets and at huge buildings. "And down there is where the stray cats live," Oxnard said with fear in his voice, pointing to a dark alleyway on the other side of the street.

"Cats?" Kaito asked with interest. "Yeah, they're mean to us hamsters. You shouldn't go down there," Hamtaro warned warily. Too bad that was just what Kaito intended to do. Maybe Ben, his Bengal cat that ran away from him when he first came to this city, was there. He'd have to do it when he was alone, though.

"Hey, isn't thatâ€|" Oxnard began, pointing ahead of them. Across the sidewalk padded the brown and white hamster Kaito recognized as the one they saw on the TV. "It's Sparkle!" Hamtaro said excitedly. Oxnard seemed less enthusiastic.

"Hey! Sparkle!!" Hamtaro called, waving. When the hamster looked, he quickly ran over to her, Kaito and Oxnard close behind.

"Hamha, Sparkle! What'cha doing?" Hamtaro asked friendlily. There was a pause as Sparkle just stared at them. "It's none of your business. And why are you calling out my name so loudly? Do you want a million fans to come running over? And it's Sparkle-_sama._"

She was worse than Kaito had thought. Her voice sounded nothing like her singing voice, making him wonder if the voice he heard on TV was even hers. "S-sorry," Hamtaro stammered.

"Whatever. I've got work to do, so be gone Ham-'weirdos,'" Sparkle demanded, as if they could just disappear in a puff of smoke. She then noticed Kaito. "Who's the rag doll?"

Kaito twitched. He had never been so directly insulted by a commoner. He clenched his fist, finding it hard to resist doing something violent.

"Kaito-kun's not a rag doll!" Hamtaro defended. "Yeah, why do you have to be so mean, Sparkle?" Oxnard asked. Kaito felt even more insult being defended by these hamsters.

Sparkle put a paw to one on her short pigtailed delicately, as if it were fragile. "I'm not being mean. I'm just pointing out the obvious. I mean, look at him. It's clear he's never been groomed in his life."

Kaito looked down at his fur at this. Of course he groomed himself, every hamster did. He was so concentrated looking at his fur that he didn't notice Sparkle walking up to him.

"Well, fluffy? How many times has your owner groomed you?" Sparkle asked. "Hm?" Kaito muttered. Why would his owner groom him? Sparkle laughed at his hesitation. "Of course, I knew it! Not once. Now, you've wasted enough of my time already. Thank you and goodnight," she taunted, turning and padding off with a superior posture.

That night Kaito was still so mad that he sat in a corner of his cage with his arms crossed for a while. He hadn't even been able to defend himself. In his kingdom that was shameful. He had never met a performer like Sparkle before and he never wanted to. Silently he swore to himself that he'd get her back somehow.

Roberto then walked in and Kaito braced himself. He'd better not do that thing again. He did, and when he stuck his hand into the cage to retrieve Kaito, he made a dash for the little house. Roberto was faster, though, catching Kaito by the scruff of the neck and pulling him out.

As Kaito struggled, Roberto took out a small brush and tried to stroke it down his back. As he struggled, Kaito began to wonder if this was what Sparkle meant by being groomed by his owner. He wasn't able to break free until he bit his owner. When Roberto loosened his grip in surprise, Kaito leapt away, onto the floor, and made a dash for the door.

Samba, seeing some fun in this, hopped up and ran after Kaito. When he caught up seconds later, he tried to lick the hamster. Instead, his tongue accidentally lifted Kaito off the floor and right into his mouth. The puppy closed his mouth in surprise.

"Samba, spit him out!" Roberto demanded. Samba did nothing, confused. He yelped loudly when Kaito bit his tongue, throwing him out. "Ew!" He grunted as dog slobber dripped off his fur. He was then picked up again by Roberto.

"Great, now this is going to be even harder." Kaito continued to stubbornly struggle as he felt the brush touch his back. _I don't care what that diva says, there's no way I'm going to be violated like this!_

In the dark sky flew a slow and unsteady figure. One would've mistaken it for a bat if it hadn't had such small wings. It carried a pitchfork just right for its small size. "Pfffht. Time to have some fun," it laughed as it looked at the struggling hamster through Roberto's window.

* * *

>"Take me or Leave me" Â© Rent(musical) <p>Ehmâ€¦ I've never seen Rent, therefore I don't know why the song was used in it. As you can see, I changed it a bit because Sparkle was singing it solo and just as a song. I just thought it suited her a bitâ€¦ That aside, this is far from the last time you'll see Sparkle. And our "pfffht" friend there has a few unfriendly plans. So, look forward to Chapter 25: Love Sickness!<p>

25. Chapter 25: Love Sickness

Chapter 25: Love Sickness

When Kaito woke up he was surprised to see that it was bright outside. Upon looking at Roberto's bed, he saw that it was empty. _I slept late,_ he thought, scratching his back. "Owâ€¦" he muttered when he felt a sting. There was a very small cut on his lower back. "Must've sat on a sharp piece of wood shavings."

Kaito yawned as he stood up. "Guess I'll go now." Before jumping to the window sill he checked on the dog, who, to his surprise, was staring at him on the bed. Kaito hadn't forgotten the dog's "attempt" to eat him the night before.

When Samba stood up, Kaito leapt to the window sill and squeezed under the window just as he reached him. He turned around when he heard the dog whining and tapping at the window with a paw. "Hmphâ€¦ sucks to be big, huh?" Kaito teased.

Instead of going straight to the clubhouse, Kaito took a stroll around the city. Hamtaro had said that he and some other Ham-Hams would be by the "pet shop" he was shown yesterday. Kaito stopped when he saw another hamster.

She was wearing a mask over her face usually worn by people with a Cold, but Kaito recognized her as the snobby diva. But, for some reason, "snobby" didn't seem to fit her in his mind anymore as he looked at her.

Kaito was suddenly overcome by a feeling he had never felt before. He had a terrible urge to just run over to Sparkle and hug herâ€¦ and that's just what he did.

"Sparkle-chaaan!!" Sparkle looked over at her name being called just

in time to dodge Kaito's arms. "What theâ€¦?! Who are you?! Oh, you're that rag doll," she grunted. "Your nicknames flatter me, Sparkle-chan!" Kaito said with a big smile, hugging Sparkle.

"Hey! Leggo! What if someone sees?!" Sparkle yelled, trying to push Kaito away as she looked around quickly. "That's good. Everyone should see our love," Kaito purred. "Love?! No, no, no! I have enough freaky fans like you already," Sparkle growled, finally pushing Kaito away from her.

"But I _love_ you, Sparkle-chan," Kaito insisted. "And I don't care! And that's Sparkle-_sama_!"

"Sparkle-sama."

Sparkle seemed slightly surprised that Kaito actually listened to her. She then made a sly smile. "If you really love me, then why don't you go fetch me some nice acorns, I'm famished," she said.

Kaito hugged her again. "We should go together!" Sparkle quickly pushed him off again. "I've got other things to do. Now fetch!" She demanded, pointing down the sidewalk. Kaito obeyed and ran off toward the direction she was pointing. "They're all the same," Sparkle chuckled, swiping her paws together.

Kaito was walking down the sidewalk with a big smile and a dazed look. Only when someone called his name did he stop. "Kaito-kun! Are you okay?" Hamtaro asked as he and a few other Ham-Hams ran over to him. "I'm fine!" Kaito answered happily.

"You sure? You were acting awfully strange with Sparkle," Oxnard commented. "Yeah, like, what's up with you hugging her so much?" Sandy asked. "Huggingâ€¦?" Kaito had a distracted look for a moment, before quickly shaking his head.

"That was weirdâ€¦!" Kaito muttered, putting a paw to his head. "What was?" Hamtaro asked. Kaito stared at the others for a moment, before shyly inquiring, "Did I do something really strange just now?"

The Ham-Hams nodded. "You were all over Sparkle as if she were a juicy sunflower seed," Oxnard said. Kaito raised an eyebrow. "Thanks for the simile, Oxnard, but I think more specifically you were all over her like you were in love," Maxwell explained.

Kaito was taken aback. "L-love?!" He stammered. "It's really weird you'd be interested in Sparkle-chan, especially after what you were saying yesterday," Sandy commented, cocking her head. "I'm not!" Kaito snapped, surprising the four.

"Then, whyâ€¦?" Hamtaro hesitated. "I don't knowâ€¦ It was likeâ€¦ as soon as I saw her I couldn't control myself," Kaito explained awkwardly, looking down. "Sounds like love sickness to me," Maxwell said.

"Love sickness?" Everyone except Kaito and Maxwell echoed. Maxwell opened his book and flipped to a certain page. "It says here that when you suffer from love sickness, you are overcome by a deep love for a person, any certain person, and can no longer control your actions when around them."

Whoever wrote that book has a bee hive in their brain, Kaito thought irritably. "That's, like, got to be what Kaito-kun has!" Sandy exclaimed. "Yeah, poor Kaito-kun his suffering from love sickness," Hamtaro said sympathetically. Kaito was twitching with irritation.

"You should go home and rest!" Oxnard said to him. "Yes. It says here that love sickness eventually goes away on its own. The best cure is to stay away from the person that your 'in love' with," Maxwell agreed. "Let's go!" Hamtaro demanded before Kaito could object, grabbing his paw.

The four brought Kaito to Roberto's house. He showed them how to climb up the wire and get to the window. "It's kinda like how I get in and out of my house," Hamtaro commented when they were in the gutter.

Kaito stopped the four when they got to the window. "Hold on, that dog was awake when I left. We should be quiet," he whispered. "Why?" Hamtaro asked loudly. "Because it'll eat us!" Kaito tried to whisper.

"Like, Samba would never eat us," Sandy said, surprising Kaito. She squeezed under the window and called the dog's name. "What are you doing?!" Kaito yelled. Before she could answer, Samba jumped onto the bed and hopped over to Sandy, tail wagging.

Kaito watched with surprise when Samba licked Sandy and she laughed, petting his nose. "C'mon, he's not going to _eat_ you," Maxwell said when everyone but Kaito entered the house. Kaito obeyed after a moment of hesitation. Samba was too busy greeting everyone else to notice him right away.

"Hey, didn't you say Samba tried to eat you before?" Hamtaro asked. Kaito nodded quickly. "It chased me around the house and was about to bite my head off when it caught me untilâ€¦" it stopped and started licking meâ€¦" Kaito's voice trailed off.

"Maybe he was just playing," Oxnard guessed. _Awfully rough for 'just playing,'_ Kaito thought bitterly. "Or maybe he smelt us on you," Maxwell said. "Yeah! Samba knows us. Though I can't imagine why he was chasing you before," Hamtaro agreed, crossing his arms in thought.

"Yeahâ€¦" Kaito muttered. He decided to leave out the fact that Samba was angry because Kaito bit him.

"Samba, make sure you let Kaito-kun rest, okay?" Sandy ordered when the five leapt to the table Kaito's cage was on. Samba only cocked his head, still wagging his tail.

"Ah! Sunflower seeds! I'm starving!" Oxnard squeaked, jumping into the cage and headed straight for Kaito's bowl. "Oxnard-kun, c'mon," Hamtaro called, jumping in, too. "Guys, what if Roberto comes?" Maxwell asked, following them, Sandy right behind him.

Kaito slowly followed them, giving Samba a cautious glance. The puppy simply sat there, staring at them curiously. "Though I am hungry," Kaito heard Maxwell say when he closed the cage door.

Kaito watched them as they scarfed down his food. He didn't really mind. He knew Roberto would just give him more when he came home. Though, in his kingdom, civilians dared to ever ask a knight for something. In a kingdom or not, though, eating someone's food without permission was rude.

Kaito twitched his ears at a sound by the door. Looking over, he saw the doorknob turning. "Guys! The manâ€"Roberto's back!" he yelled, still not used to calling Roberto by name. The Ham-Hams froze. "Quickly, in the house!" Kaito ordered, pointing to his small toy house.

Three forced themselves inside while one, Hamtaro, hide underneath it. Kaito looked back at the door as Roberto walk in, sighing. "Haruna drives me crazy sometimesâ€" hmm?" He looked surprised to see Kaito staring up at him. "Weird. I don't usually see you out when I come home. Oh well, I guess it's better that you're up. We gotta go to the vet soon, anyway," he shrugged.

Kaito cocked his head. "Eke?" Roberto dropped his book bag to his bed and greeted the puppy that was literally going wild with excitement. "Hey there, Samba, let's get you outside," he said, following the puppy as he ran through the door.

"What luck!" Maxwell said when it was quiet for a few seconds. He poked his head out of the house. "A vet will surely be able to cure you of your sickness."

"Listen, guysâ€" Kaito began irritably, and then asked, "wait, what's a vet?" Hamtaro poked his head out from under the house. "Didn't you hear him? He's taking you to a vet soon. Vets can cure any sickness!"

"Though they're scary all the same," Oxnard muttered, shivering. They all hid when Roberto came back it with a calmer Samba. "All right, let's go. I'll bring Samba, too, for a checkup," he said, putting a leash on the puppy's collar.

Kaito stiffened when Roberto reached for his cage, but, instead of grabbing only Kaito, he grabbed the whole cage and lifted it. "I guess I'll bring the whole thing."

Kaito and the Ham-Hams were then carried out of the house and down the street, to the vet's.

* * *

>Hmâ€" I think this fanfic is finally starting to feel moreâ€" Hamtaro-likeâ€" Not exactly what I was going for, but it's fun, all the same! Kaito acting all out of character around Sparkle was hard to typeâ€" a "together" guy completely losing itâ€" Anyway, the next chapter will be from Roberto's point of view, going back to that morning. So, look forward to Chapter 26: Bad Idea! <div>

26. Chapter 26: Bad Idea

Chapter 26: Bad Idea

"You're late agaaaain!" A boy teased as Roberto ran into the room out of breath. "Shaddupâ€|" he grumbled, dropping his book bag on his desk. "You've been slacking lately, Jiei, got some issues at home?" the boy nosily asked.

"Not that it's any of your business, but no. I simply woke up late," Roberto replied with annoyance. "Just like yesterday. It's only a wonder what tomorrow's morning with bring you," the boy laughed.

He was an annoying kid, obviously Roberto's age since they were in the same class, but Roberto's closest friend. His name was Kumo Nobusuke. He wasn't in soccer like Roberto, though he commonly liked to join in on the "pour the water cooler on the coach" activity. Actually, Nobusuke was in risk of failing some of his classes. He was a typical, lazy, trouble-making school kid.

"Did you finish the review sheet?" Nobusuke asked Roberto. Roberto hesitated. "Noâ€|" "Neither did I!" Nobusuke replied quickly with a smile, as if it were a good thing. "Don't bother asking Kimura for his sheet. He's already been asked, like, five times," he said when he saw Roberto looking around.

Roberto sighed. Everyone knew that Travis always did his homework and every question was guaranteed to be correctly answered. He was the "prince charming" of the class, or better yet, the whole school. Fortunately or unfortunately, he was on Roberto's soccer team.

Roberto then noticed Laura, who was looking satisfied with herself as she talked to Kana. He had been trying to avoid her, like he used to, ever since the "dream." Though there were inevitable times when they'd be close to each other. Roberto would hide his bandaged wrist whenever she was near. If she believed everything had been really just a dream, then it was best not to convince her that it might've been real.

Although he should be avoiding her, this was an emergency!

"Hey, Haruna, " Roberto called, walking over. Laura looked up in surprised, then made that look she always gave him and asked, "What do you want?" She was pushing for an argument, though Roberto really did want something this time.

"Did you finish that review sheet?" He asked. "Yeah, whyâ€|? You're not getting it, you know!" Laura quickly growled. "Ouchâ€|" Nobusuke muttered over Roberto's shoulder. Roberto gave him a glare and he sheepishly walked away.

"Aw, c'mon. Why not?" Roberto asked, returning to the conversation. "Because you should've done it yourself," Laura grunted. "I was going to finish mine this morning, but I woke up later than usual," _It's because I'm used to waking up to Flute's wheel,_ Roberto explained.

His hamster hadn't woken up to run on his wheel that morning. His alarm clock when off minutes after Flute usually woke him up, thus making him lose time that morning.

"You shouldn't hold things off until last minute," Laura lectured. When Roberto made no response to this she reluctantly handed him the

paper. "But you owe me big time. It took me all night to finish."

"Great!" Roberto exclaimed, snatching the paper and returning to his desk to copy the answers. "You're too nice, Laura-chan," Kana smiled. "I know," Laura replied, crossing her arms.

The bell rang after six hours of schooling and Roberto was just walking down the hall to go home. He had no practice today, which was convenient since he had to go to the vet. He stopped when someone called his name.

Laura reluctantly walked over to him, to his surprise. "Remember that 'you owe me' thing I said this morning?" She asked. "Yeahâ€|" Roberto replied, not really knowing where this conversation was going. "Well, I know you're going to forget later, so you have to pay me back now."

"What? Why?" Roberto asked. "Because you'll forget! Or you'll just say 'I don't owe you,'" Laura quickly replied. "Well, what do you want?" Roberto shrugged. "I don't know," Laura replied.

Roberto thought to himself. "I couldâ€|" train your dog a bit," he offered. "Are you saying Brandy's a bad dog?" Laura growled. "No. I just doubt he's been taught to do any more than 'sit' by his amateur owner," Roberto insulted. "He knows more than just 'sit'!" Laura snapped.

Roberto decided to drop the topic. "I could do a night's homework for you," he offered. Laura crossed her arms. "Like I'd want your work," she mocked. Roberto was trying to keep from losing his temper. He was out of ideas. This girl was too picky to please.

He then thought of the perfect idea as he looked down the hall. "I could set up a date between you and Kimura." He couldn't help but smile as he said this and held back a laughter at Laura's bewildered reaction.

"A-A d-date? With K-Kimura-kun?!" Laura stammered. "Sure. It'll be easy for me," Roberto grinned. "I-I guess soâ€|" yes, that'll be fine," she replied more steadily, trying to hide her uneasiness from him.

"Fine. I'll do it tomorrow, though. I'm busy today. Let's sayâ€|" Saturday, at the festival?" Roberto asked. "Yesâ€|" that'll be fine," Laura replied, quickly turning and walking away stiffly.

After that Roberto headed home to retrieve his pets to go to the vet. He figured Samba was due for a checkup anyway. When he walked outside with Samba on a leash and Kaito's cage, he only got about halfway to the vet before someone called his name again. It was Kana this time.

"Jiei-kun, is it true that you're setting up a date between Kimura-kun and Laura-chan?" She asked, panting from running over to him. "W-what?! How do you know about that?" Roberto demanded. "Kumo-kun told me," Kana answered simply. Damn you, Kumo, you spying weasel, Roberto cursed to himself.

"So it is true. Then you'll be there, right?" Kana asked. "Where?"

Roberto inquired. "At their date, of course," Kana answered. "Why would I?"

"To make sure everything goes well," Kana replied. "I don't care if everything falls apart," Roberto shrugged. "You should, because you know what she might do if it doesn't work out," Kana warned. "She'll tell you that it wasn't enough and you'll owe her again."

"Why do you--?!" Roberto began angrily. Kana simply smiled. "Ugh, fine! If I have to," Roberto sighed, rubbing his forehead. What a nuisance this whole thing was becoming. "Great! See you on Saturday," Kana said, running off. Roberto glared at Flute in his cage. "This is all your fault," he blamed silently. "Eke?" the hamster squeaked.

Doctor Lion, expecting Roberto, saw him shortly after he arrived at the vet. "Yes, you're doing fine with him and he looks much better," Lion said after Roberto showed him the cage. "Now to check up on little Samba."

The puppy was cowering in a corner of the room. "Now, now, it'll only take a second," the doctor assured Samba, picking him up, then said to Roberto, "We'll give him his check up in another room." Roberto followed Lion out of the room, leaving Flute "alone" in his cage.

* * *

>Ba-dum! This chapter was really just to show Roberto's school-life a bit, though it wasn't much! The POV will go back to Kaito next chapter. Hmm! not much to say! Well, don't forget to review and stick around for Chapter 27: Checkup! <div>

27. Chapter 27: Checkup

Chapter 27: Checkup

"Be brave, Samba," Kaito heard Oxnard whisper as the doctor and Roberto left the room. "Like, finally! I can't breathe in here," Sandy complained, forcing herself out of the small house. Maxwell and Oxnard tumbling on top of her as soon as they escaped as well. Hamtaro slowly crawled out from under the house.

"Th-this place gets scarier and scarier every time I come here," Oxnard shivered. "The vet said Kaito-kun looked good. That means he can't tell that he's suffering from love sickness," Maxwell pointed out.

"Oh no! We've got to tell him somehow," Hamtaro said desperately. Kaito was tapping his paw to the ground irritably. These hamsters were wasting their breath on something stupid.

"I thought I recognized those voices," someone said. The five looked over to see a light brown and white hamster standing outside of the cage. A red clip held back some extra fur on her head and she wore a white first-aid hat.

"Hamha, Flora," Hamtaro greeted happily. The four Ham-Hams walked over to the cage door and hopped out. "Come on, Kaito-kun, she's a friend," Oxnard invited. Kaito nodded slowly and followed

them.

"Flora-chan, this is Kaito-kun, he's new around here," Sandy introduced when Flora gave Kaito a curious look. "Oh! You must be who Lion-sensei was talking about. Pleased to meet you. My name is Nurse, but you can call me Flora," Flora greeted with a smile.

"Pleased to meet you, too!" Kaito replied quietly. Flora then looked at everyone in turn. "Why are you all here, anyway?" She asked. "Oh, yeah. Kaito-kun is suffering from love sickness," Hamtaro said. "Love sickness?!" Flora exclaimed.

Kaito gaped. Not her too!

"What's that?" Flora asked, cocking her head. Kaito nearly fell over. "You've never heard of love sickness?" Sandy asked. Flora shook her head, disbelief in her eyes. "It's when a hamster suddenly falls in love with someone and can't control their actions around them," Maxwell explained.

"That's absurd!" Flora replied almost angrily, taking the five aback. "Don't make up diseases!" She scorned. "But it's true!" Maxwell replied sheepishly. "It says so in his book," Sandy said.

"Then whoever wrote that book has a bee hive in their brain," Flora replied. _I like this girl,_ Kaito thought. "Then how do you explain why Kaito-kun was acting so weird around Sparkle?" Oxnard asked.

"Do explain," Flora commanded, crossing her arms with interest. "Kaito-kun said that he"

"Let _him_ explain," Flora demanded, looking at Kaito. "I always get a better idea when the person with the 'disease' tells me their symptoms."

"Well!" Kaito was a bit embarrassed to admit what he had done. "As soon as I saw Sparkle-sam! I mean Sparkle, I started acting really weird. I felt like I was obsessed with her and I wanted to do everything I could to please her!"

As he was talking Flora was examining his body. She looked in his ears and tapped his knee cap with a small hammer-like object. "I see. It's just love at first sight," she answered simply.

"That's impossible. Kaito-kun met Sparkle yesterday, and he wasn't acting like that," Hamtaro replied. "Well, I don't know what to say to that, but it's not a disease. See a therapist, or something," Flora said when she was done checking Kaito. "Who's next?"

Oxnard hid behind Hamtaro. "We're not here are a checkup," Hamtaro said. "Well, you're here anyway. Why not?" Flora asked. Kaito couldn't help but notice how much more mature Flora acted than the other Ham-Hams. Just how did they make friends with her?

"Sorry I can't help. Anyway, you should go back in the cage. Lion-sensei will be back soon," Flora concluded. "Okay. Bye-Q, Flora," Hamtaro said as they all began entering the cage.

"Um, hey, Sandy-chan," Flora said before Sandy hopped in. "Yes?" Sandy replied. "Has Stan-kun gotten himself hurt lately?" She asked

with hesitation. "No. I've, like, been constantly telling him to be careful," Sandy answered. "Oh, all right," Flora said absently.

The Ham-Hams had hidden by the time Doctor Lion and Roberto came back with an upset Samba. "He might be a bit sore where the shot was given," Lion said. "Here you go," he said to Samba, giving him a small treat. Samba greedily took it, all signs of unhappiness gone.

"That will be all. Come again in a month, all right?" Lion asked Roberto. "Okay. Thank you," Roberto replied, bowing politely.

When they were brought back to Roberto's house the Ham-Hams made their escape as soon as Roberto left the room. "I'm sorry we couldn't help, Kaito-kun," Hamtaro said sadly when they were by the window sill. "Like Flora-san said, I'm sure it's nothing," Kaito replied from his cage.

"I guess we'll have to wait for it to go away on its own," Maxwell said crestfallenly. They left with a hurry when Roberto returned to the room. "Hey, what happened to all of your food?" He asked when he looked at Kaito's cage. "Eke?" Kaito chirped.

"I feel terrible that we couldn't help Kaito-kun," Maxwell said as they padded down the roof of Roberto's house. Hamtaro nodded. What if he was too sick to come to the clubhouse tomorrow?

"We should visit him first thing tomorrow," Hamtaro said. "But what if we catch the love sickness?" Oxnard asked. "It doesn't exist, remember?" Maxwell replied, disappointed.

"Phhft. Too funny," someone grunted. The Ham-Hams turned around to see an oh, too familiar face. "Spat!" Hamtaro spat. The gray and white hamster chuckled from above the window. "You guys look so stupid. Phhft. Trying to find out what 'disease' that guy's got. Phhft," Spat laughed. "What? Don't tell us you did this?!" Maxwell growled. "Then I won't. But then you'll never know what's wrong with him," Spat sneered. "Spat, you rotten jerk!" Sandy exclaimed.

"Why'd you pick Kaito-kun?!" Hamtaro asked. "'Cause he's new, duh. Phhft. And he'll never think that I did it," Spat replied. "Tell us how to cure him!" Hamtaro demanded.

"Now that's no fun. Phhft. You've gotta figure that out on your own. Phhft!" Spat laughed. "See ya, phhft!" With that, Spat flapped his small wings and slowly flew behind the house, out of sight.

"We should've known Spat was behind this," Maxwell grunt with a clenched fist. "We've gotta find Harmony," Oxnard suggested.

* * *

>Ooh, Spat! How did you know? Anyway, in case you didn't notice, Flora mentioning Stan meant something. I won't say what, though! The next chapter is terribly long 'cause I didn't want to cut it up. So, look forward to Chapter 28: The Diva and the Rag Doll! <div>

28. Chapter 28: The Diva and the Rag Doll

Chapter 28: The Diva and the Rag Doll

As soon as Roberto left Kaito wasted no time leaving. After what happened yesterday he was less cautious of Samba, but still watched the dog as he jumped to the window sill. He crawled out and made his way to the ground.

"They said I should rest, but I can't just sit around in that cage all day," Kaito said to himself. "I'll just have to avoid that singer."

Kaito absently began walking down the sidewalk. How long had it been since he left the kingdom? 2 or 3 weeks? He had to go back in 2 months and he still hadn't learned any information. He had to fulfill this mission no matter what. Or else the king would never entrust him to a mission again.

He began wondering if anyone at the kingdom missed him. The only one he could of that would was Meeko. Kaito had no family or many friends. It was his life as a knight.

Before he knew it Kaito was in the city. His paws had subconsciously dragged him there. Did he want to find Sparkle? He looked to the side just incase she was near, and then noticed the alleyway Hamtaro had warned him about. Now would be a good time to look for Ben.

Kaito crossed the street as fast as he could, nearly getting flattened by passing cars. He took a moment to catch his breath when he reached the other side and then looked into the alleyway.

It was too dark to see much, so he walked in. "Ben?" He whispered, looking for his cat's spotted pelt. He was greeted by a low growl. Kaito quickly looked up to see two yellow eyes staring at him from atop a garbage can. They belonged to a massive figure of fur.

The large cat hopped down in front of Kaito. It wasn't like any cat Kaito had ever seen before. It was dark brown with black stripes all around its body. Its muscles were broad and heavy. The cats around his kingdom were agile and slender, so that they could run fast. Still, he felt little reason to be afraid. Cats were never a threat in his kingdom.

"You're not Ben," Kaito remark, uninterested. The cat's eyes followed him as he began to walk around its long legs. It quickly slapped an unsheathed paw in front of him. "What theâ€¦!" He looked up at the cat, whose fangs were bared now.

"Gack!" Kaito squeaked when the cat lunged to bite him. He leapt back and made a run for it, but the cat was faster. It jumped over him and was in front of him again. Kaito managed to narrowly dodge to the side when the cat bent over to bite him again.

Not knowing what else to do, he grabbed the cat's whiskers and tugged as hard as he could. A few popped out, making the cat yowl in pain. Kaito took this chance and dashed across the street.

The cat stared after him but didn't follow. Somehow, Kaito had a

feeling the cat wouldn't forget him. When he reached the other side he leaned against a building to catch his breath. What kind of cat attacked a hamster? What kind of cat had muscles like _that_? What kind of cat _was_ that?

Kaito's thoughts were interrupted when he saw the familiar figure of Sparkle on the next block. He would've ran away hadn't he already lost control of himself.

"Sparkle-samaaa!!" Kaito dashed across the street, seemingly oblivious to the cars narrowly missing him. "Oh no, not you again!" Sparkle stiffened, as Kaito jumped up to hug her. She jumped out of the way, making Kaito fall flat on his face. He immediately hopped back up to his feet with a big smile.

"I missed you, Sparkle-sama!" He chirped. "Don't they allâ€¦" Sparkle replied irritably, brushing one of her pigtails. "Where are those acorns I told you to get, anyway?" She suddenly asked.

Kaito twitched. "Oh, I forgot, I guessâ€¦" He seemed confused with himself. "Figures. All boys are the same. They're all over you until you tell them to do something," Sparkle shrugged.

"But I love you, Sparkle-sama," Kaito insisted. "They do, too. You're no different," Sparkle replied indifferently. "They say they love me, but they never mean it."

"Why don't I show you that I mean it?" Kaito asked stubbornly. "How?" Sparkle asked, slightly interested. "I'llâ€¦ take you out somewhere tonight!" He offered. "Where?"

Kaito looked around in thought. "Umâ€¦ there!" He said, pointing to a flyer near them. It was obviously put up by a hamster, being so small and close to the ground. "A festival? But it's being held by humans," Sparkle said, uninterested again.

"But there's a place for hamsters, too," Kaito replied, reading the flyer. Though he had no idea how hamsters could hold a festival. According to the flyer, the festival was being held on that day and Saturday.

"Wellâ€¦ I have no plans tonightâ€¦" Sparkle said dully, thinking. "Please! I'll get you anything you want there," Kaito begged. "In that case, all right. But you'd better not bore me. I've got better things to do than hang around with a rag doll, it's bad for my image," Sparkle said. Kaito nodded quickly.

"Fine, then. Be there a 7 o'clock. Don't be late! And don't call out my name the second you see me," Sparkle demanded. When Kaito nodded again, she walked off. When she was out of sight Kaito jumped into the air with exhilaration. "I've got a date with Sparkle!" He cheered, but then paused and blinked. "I've got a date with _who_?!"

Kaito spent the rest of the day wondering if he should even show up. If he didn't, what would he do if he saw her again later? If he did, who's saying he won't do something stupid there? He didn't even know what a festival was, really.

In the end he decided to go. Hamtaro had shown him where it was being

held the day when he first he met Sparkle. It was at a shrine, which was somewhat in a forest near a lake. He hadn't seen the Ham-Hams all day, nor did he really want to. They'd probably tell him to forget the whole thing and rest to cure his "illness".

When it was time, Kaito was barely a minute early. Sparkle was "fashionably late," according to her, when she showed up five minutes late. As expected, Kaito went into a frenzy as soon as he saw her.

"Let's get this over with," Sparkle muttered. She was wearing a pretty pink and white kimono, which Kaito could only wonder where she found one hamster-sized. He calmed down a bit when they started walking around. It was dark now, but everything was loud and lit up.

Kaito looked at the stalls lined up with interest. "What's the point of picking up a ball with a weak string?" he asked when they stopped at one that had painted water balloons in a small pool of water. Attached to the balloons was a small, weak string.

"The point is to slowly and carefully lift it across without it breaking. Though 90 of the time it breaks," Sparkle answered as if it were obvious. Kaito paused. "Maybe it's not to do it slowlyâ€¦" he began.

Sparkle rolled her eyes as he reached for a balloon string. Though she was immediately surprised when he snapped it towards him and had it out of the pool in two seconds flat. "See?" He asked. When he motioned the balloon toward Sparkle, the string snapped and it burst on the ground, splashing both their feet.

"I'm sorry!" Kaito loudly apologized when Sparkle began twitching her ear irritably. To his surprise, he was given a balloon by the stall keeper. This balloon looked just like the one he had used, but it was attached to a stronger, stretchy rubber band.

"If you're not going to use it, give it to me," Sparkle said when Kaito just stared at it. He happily gave it to her and she bounced it on the band a bit as they walked on.

"What's this one?" Kaito asked, walking over to another stall curiously. "What are you, a kid?" Sparkle mocked, slowly following. This stall had rows of small bottles in the back and a pile of round rocks on a table.

"You have to throw the rocks in the bottles. But, since the bottle's are so small, no one ever hardly wins," Sparkle explained. "The prize is that scarf." Hanging on the ceiling was a shiny silk blue scarf. "I'd look so pretty in that," Sparkle said dreamily.

Kaito decided to try it out, though Sparkle was making it more than obvious that she didn't expect him to win. She was once again caught off guard when he tossed three rocks, one at a time, into the air and each one when into a bottle.

"Here," Kaito said, handing Sparkle the blue scarf when the stall keeper gave it to him. "You sure you've never done this before?" Sparkle asked suspiciously, retrieving the scarf. "Positive."

After that they went to a few more stalls. One had a few balloons attached to a wall where one had to pop them with darts to win. Kaito easily popped three with three darts. After a while of winning a few hamsters began watching with interest and curiosity. Kaito didn't know why they were so surprised. Every knight knew how to aim; every knight knew how to judge distances; every knight knew how to balance.

"What other stalls are there?" Kaito asked after a while. "I think you've won them all," Sparkle remarked. Kaito was a bit disappointed. He was having fun, something he wasn't used to.

"But there are other things to do, you know," Sparkle said. "There are?" Kaito asked suddenly. "Yeah, rides and stuff."

The rides caught Kaito even more off guard. There were roller coasters, whirling cups, haunted mansions, and much more. The roller coasters made Kaito feel like a cat tamer, who, in his kingdom, tamed and sold cats. The whirling cups simply made him dizzy, while the haunted mansion made Kaito realize that Sparkle had a weak spot for ghosts. While she was jumping here and there, Kaito never flinched. It was something else that was reflecting from his knight training. "Never fear what you don't know," his teacher had said.

Kaito was having much fun now. Sparkle's bored expression was also gone now, while Kaito was much more interested in the festival than pleasing her. He was even laughing, something he couldn't remember the last time he had done.

After a while, they walked to the lake after getting some hamster-sized cotton candy. Sparkle laughed at Kaito when he nearly choked on it when it melted in his mouth as he was swallowing.

"You can't tell me you've never had cotton candy before. It's the best, yet the worst," Sparkle said, making Kaito cock his head. "It'll go straight to my thighs," she added with a mouthful. "You sure this isn't the first time you've been to a festival?"

"Yeah," Kaito lied. Though it was true, he didn't want to admit it, afraid that she might ask why. He stared at his cotton candy, wondering if he should dare eat more.

Sparkle looked at him with interest. "You know, you're kinda different than other boys," she commented, making Kaito stop as he was about to place more cotton candy in his mouth. She looked out at the lake.

"Most boys are always showing off that they're going out with me and picking fights with whoever looks my way. In the end, neither of us ends up having fun," Actually, you act like you've never gone out with a girl," Sparkle said.

Another thing that was true but Kaito didn't want to admit. Sparkle was the first girl he had ever been interested in, let alone gone out with.

The two of them sat down near the lake. It shined beautifully with the lights from hovering fire flies, lights hanging in the trees, and the bright moon shining onto it, painting it gold and silver.

Kaito felt strange. He wasn't used to feeling so calm and happy. The careless atmosphere the festival held made him blissful. He wondered how he ever lived without knowing that such places existed; a place where everyone was happy, and where everyone laughed and had fun.

I wish my life was always like this, Kaito thought. But it wasn't, and he knew it. Eventually he'd have to leave this happiness and return to his kingdom. His thoughts were interrupted when he felt something on his side. Sparkle was leaning on him.

"It's so quiet here," she mumbled. Kaito nodded slowly, looking out at the lake. Sparkle didn't move, but seemed surprised, probably by his calm reaction to her contact. Though he never suspected she was testing him. "You really are different," she commented quietly, closing her eyes.

There was a moment of silence until a loud strange spitting sound broke it. "Phfft! This isn't right!" Someone yelled. Sparkle immediately straightened and Kaito looked around in alarm. A hamster with small wings hopped down seemingly from the sky behind them. They both jumped to their paws to face him.

"You're not supposed to be happy, phfft! You're supposed to be miserable!" The hamster spat. "Who are you?" Kaito demanded. "It's none of your business, phfft, but I'm Spat. I'm the one who gave you your so-called 'love sickness,' phfft," the hamster laughed.

"What?" Sparkle asked, bewildered. "That's right, pretty girl. Phfft. He doesn't really love you, I made him love you. Phfft. But you're supposed to be unhappy!" Spat jumped up and down in dismay. "_You_ did this?!" Kaito asked angrily, though he knew immediately after that it was the wrong thing to say. Sparkle was taking this personally.

Spat used his wings to help him jump over Kaito. As soon as he was behind him, he stuck him with his pitchfork at the area that had been sore two mornings ago. "There, now your lovey-dovey feelings should be gone, phfft!" Spat said. Indeed they were. Kaito no longer felt like hugging Sparkle when he looked at her or screaming out her name.

"Hmph. I should've known you really were like all the others. You're never really in love. You just assume you are," Sparkle said, sounding hurt. "But, Sparkle-sama!" Kaito began. "Forget it! I'm fed up with boys. All they do is lie," Sparkle snapped painfully, turning her back to him. Spat watched with amusement.

Kaito felt terrible, but what was he to do? He was just a puppet to a dirty joke, and Sparkle was the victim. "I'm sorry, Sparkle!" he mumbled, but she made no acknowledgement of hearing him.

Kaito twitched when he heard Spat giggling behind him. "Yes, phfft! This was what I wanted. Misery and pain, phfft!" he laughed. "You bastard!" Kaito hissed, turning on him and clenching his fists. Spat backed up in surprise. "What's your damn problem?!" he demanded angrily.

Kaito was just getting ready to simply punch Spat in the face before a yell stopped him. "Run away!" Someone yelled. Kaito looked over to see Panda running over, waving his arms frantically. He stopped when he saw Kaito.

"Kaito-kun! We gotta go! There's a—"there's a cat!" Panda stammered quickly. "What?" Kaito asked. Panda took in a quick breath. "There a huge cat wandering around the festival. It's freaking out hamsters and people."

"A cat?" Kaito echoed. "Yeah, it's, uh—| oh, it's dark brown with black stripes. It's _huge_ and it's attacking a lot of hamsters!" Panda explained. _Dark brown with black stripes?!_ Kaito realized in horror that it must've been the cat that had tried to eat him that morning.

* * *

>What'd I tell ya? Long, right? Well, because of this(and other reasons), I'm gonna add a day or two till I upload the next chapter—| I need a break—| Anyway, I can't believe I'm saying this, but poor Sparkle. She was really starting to like Kaito, too. Oh well, you can be sure that this "like all the others" thing she keeps saying will be explained eventually. That said, stay tuned for Chapter 29: Cat Fight and a Crazy Bird! <div>

29. Chapter 29: Cat Fight and a Crazy Bird

Chapter 29: Cat Fight and a Crazy Bird

"I—| is that Spat?" Panda asked after he had caught his breath, suddenly realizing the bat-like hamster was there. Spat was cowering under Kaito's fist and leapt back quickly when Kaito turned away.

Panda shook his head quickly. Not giving Kaito time to answer, he prompted, "Whatever, c'mon, we gotta go! _Now_! The cat was pretty close to here last time I saw it." He looked around warily.

Kaito still couldn't believe that a cat could hold such a threat, but he nodded to Panda's request. "All right, let's go—| Sparkle—|" he paused as he looked toward Sparkle, who had been tensed by the sudden warning "—|sama," he hesitated to add.

Sparkle twitched an ear, regaining herself. "I can look after myself," she said quietly but stubbornly. She spun around and began heading back to the festival, though Kaito thought it'd be safer to escape through the forest.

He was right, apparently, as the huge tabby cat suddenly pounced in front of Sparkle from behind a nearby bush. With a loud gasp, Sparkle fell back, staring up at it with wide eyes.

Kaito felt a sudden, strange sense of fury as the cat raised a claw, ready to simply swipe Sparkle out of the way. "Kaito-kun!" Panda yelled in alarm as the longhaired hamster suddenly dashed for the cat.

Kaito leapt up before the tabby lunged for Sparkle and bit one of it toes. The cat yowled in surprise and swung its paw around. Sparkle snapped back to reality and took this time to flee toward Panda.

Kaito held onto the cat's toes as tightly as he could. It seemed he was doing this a lot lately. He was surprised when the cat suddenly stopped swinging him around. It lifted him to its eye level, examining him. "You're the one I want," growled a strange voice unfamiliar to Kaito.

Thinking fast, Kaito kicked out his leg right into the cat's eye. This time, the cat writhed around enough to toss him off its toe. He was thrown to the side, right into the lake. He stayed underwater for as long as he could. When he finally resurfaced, gasping for air, he was surprised to see that the cat was gone. Panda and Sparkle were looking away. But where was Spat?

It was a good thing Kaito could swim. He had been taught how to by his teacher at his kingdom. Though getting wet was his biggest pet peeve. His long hair soaked in water like a sponge and made him feel three times heavier.

Kaito's fur hung over him like a wet towel when he had swam over to the edge of the lake and walked out. "Kaito-kun, are you okay?" Panda asked when he noticed him. "Yeah. As long as I'm still in one piece," Kaito replied, brushing a cut on his arm.

"Sparkle, are you?" "Hey!" Panda began, turning around to see Sparkle walking off. "Let her go," Kaito said solemnly. He couldn't be bothered with this. Spat had apparently fled and now he wanted nothing to do with Sparkle. It wasn't his problem anymore.

The two hamsters returned to their homes after that, but not before Panda lectured Kaito on how crazy attacking a cat like he did was. "Though, it was quite brave. I'd never be able to do that," he had said. Kaito was surprised by this compliment. Knights never admitted to not being able to do something. He was finding himself becoming more and more convinced that these Ham-Hams weren't knights the more he hung out with them.

When Kaito asked, Panda told him that a human had come over and chased the cat away while he was underwater. Apparently he had been too nervous to bother seeing if he recognized the human.

Kaito returned to his cage only moments before Roberto came into the room. He was carrying Samba, to his curiosity. Kaito watched as Roberto sat on his bed and gently rubbed a bandage on the puppy's foreleg. He could only wonder what had happened.

Roberto then looked at Kaito with surprise. "Did your water bottle break, or something?" He asked. Kaito cocked his head. He had only been able to dry himself a little bit. It'd be hours before he was completely dry; one of the downfalls for having long hair.

Kaito left a little late that morning after Roberto left. He wasn't really in the mood for going to the clubhouse, and dealing with the Ham-Hams and their predictable questions.

When he finally did leave, he took the long way around the city. He went a different way than usual, to avoid meeting Sparkle again. He brushed his arm, which was still sore from yesterday. He then suddenly remembered the strange voice he had heard when fighting the cat.

Where had it come from? The cat? Impossible. Cats didn't talk. His thoughts were interrupted by a different strange voice in an alleyway he was passing.

"Oh, buggar!" It exclaimed in an annoyed tone. The voice was a bit high-pitched and reminded Kaito of the squawk of a bird. He looked down the alleyway, not sure if he should go in.

"Well, isn't this just great? It _looks_ like a fish, but it is? No! It's just a canâ€¦ Andâ€¦ now... I'mâ€¦ stuck...!" Curiosity forced Kaito to quietly pad toward the voice. It was coming from behind a few tall cylinder shaped gray objects. One was turned over. He crawled up it and peaked over the other side to see a creature he didn't recognize.

It was a bird, Kaito could tell, but it wasn't like the ones near his kingdom. This bird was all white with gray wings and a black head. Its beak and legs were a unique red color.

Kaito could see that the odd bird had gotten its foot stuck on some sort of small white net sticking out of a ripped black bag. Tugging at it wasn't helping. Kaito decided to put aside the fact that the bird was speaking and asked, "You need help?"

The bird spun around and screamed quickly, making itself fall over. "You are a strange lookingâ€¦ thing," it commented. "Speak for yourself," Kaito replied. "What? I'm a seagull, of course!" The bird said, spreading out its wings. Kaito cocked his head.

"It's the black head, isn't it? Everyone always double-takes when they see the black head," the bird said, brushing its head with a wing. "Uhâ€¦" Kaito began. "No, wait! It's _this_ isn't it?!" the bird interrupted, holding up its caught foot as high as possible.

On its foot was a small round metallic yellow band. It was actually the band that was caught of the white net. "Everyone's always gotta notice this, huh? 'What's that around your leg, Tobi? It looks stupid,'" the bird imitated mockingly. "I don't know what it is?! _I_ didn't put it there!" It squawked angrily.

"Whoaâ€¦ uh, calm down," Kaito said, raising his paws slightly. "Calm down? How can I calm down?! I've been stuck here for hours!" the bird hissed. "Maybeâ€¦ I can help?" Kaito reluctantly offered. "Really?!" The bird suddenly asked hopefully.

Kaito slid down the other side of the garbage can, wondering just why he was wasting his time with this. He padded over to the bird's caught foot. "I might be able to bit through it," he said. "Oh, then you must be aâ€¦ uh, a rabbit, huh? They have big buck teeth that can bite through things," the bird asked. "No," Kaito replied, beginning to gnaw at the net.

"A mouse, then?"

"No."

"A suger glider?"

"A whatâ€¦? No. And you're free." The bird gasped. "Ah! I'm free! Oh, happy day!" It jumped up and flapped its wings, fluttering in the sky

for a moment, before falling back down beside Kaito.

"Waitâ€¦| Let me just warm myself up," it said. Kaito watched as the seagull stretched out its legs and wings. Were all birds around here so strange? "Soâ€¦| just what are you then?" it asked. "A hamster," Kaito answered simply. "A hamster!" the bird chirped pleasantly. "Hamsters are so cute!"

"Areâ€¦| you okay?" Kaito had to ask after a moment. "No, actually, I'm not. I'm a bit on the, uh, weird side. In case you haven't noticed," the bird admitted. Kaito cocked his head. "It's not my fault. Humans made me weird. They also put _this_ on me." It got angry when it mentioned the metallic band.

"Umâ€¦| I have to go," Kaito said, slowly crawling back up the garbage can. Going to the clubhouse didn't sound like such a bad idea all of a sudden. "Go? Where?" the bird asked quickly. It followed Kaito as he padded out of the alleyway.

"I could fly you there!" It offered, spreading out its wings. "I'm not sureâ€¦|" Kaito replied uneasily, remembering how the seagull had fallen before. "Don't worry! I'm ready this time." Without warning, the bird pecked at Kaito's scruff and lifted him up. "Hey!" Kaito exclaimed.

"Up, up, and away!" The bird squawked, flapping its wings and lifting into the air. It was a bit unsteady at first and a few times Kaito thought they were going to fall, but after they reached above the buildings it was fine. Kaito didn't dare look down.

"Where to?" the seagull asked. "Uhâ€¦| the park," Kaito answered after a moment. "By the way, my name is Tobi. We should be friends, like, uh, the tortoise and the hare," the bird suggested. "It's the lion and the mouseâ€¦"Look out!"

Tobi just narrowly missed flying into an opened window at the side of a building. "I know what I'm doing, don't worry!" He assured. Kaito couldn't help but worry, hanging over a bird's beak 50 feet in the air.

* * *

>Hmâ€¦| that break took longer than I meant to make it. Oh wellâ€¦| Hopefully there won't need to be any more for a while. Anywayâ€¦| Oh yeah! My good friend Nasuko-Chan will be putting up a new fanfic soon. So I want ya'll to read it! Why? 'Cause I know it'll be good! I'm not sure what it'll be called or when it'll be up, though. So keep your eyes peeled! With that said, stick around for Chapter 30: Official Ham-Ham! <div>

End
file.